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WE TALK WITH
HARRY BROERTJES
HE KNOWS LEGIONS
ABOUT EARLY FANDOM!

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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#108

A FICTIONEER PUBLICATION

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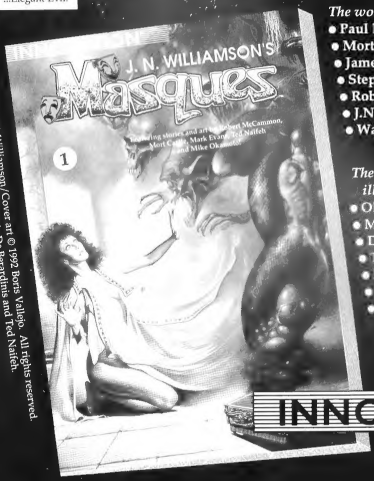

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CREDITS

COMICS INTERVIEW

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT
editor/publisher

conceived by
JIM SALICRUP
editorial and design consultant

DARREL L BOATZ
CHARLES S NOVINSKIE
associate editors

MARK JUDDERY
RICHARD PACHTER
contributing editors

MACHINE WOLF GRAPHICS
art & tone director

DON MARKSTEIN
typographer

TIMOTHY BOYER
SALLY GARLAND
D HAMILTON
Y A QUAN
production

PAUL BARTON
LEROY S BAVS
DOUGLAS ARNOLD EDWARDS
DEREK ERICKSON
PETER FISICO
ERICK A FLINT
CHARLES A GARRETT
NEIL HODGE
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LITTLE BEAU PEEP
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J R MATHER
international marketing director

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cover by:
SPIEGELMAN
color & composition:
JRM

Art: Tim Sale

UP FRONT

In the issues leading up to #100, I asked for responses to a survey about COMICS INTERVIEW magazine. To my delight, a deluge of constructive criticism and creative feedback resulted. A representative selection of those responses appears here:

Why Do You Read COMICS INTERVIEW?

"To see artwork I have never seen before and to learn about how people did break into the industry, and to know more about upcoming projects."

"I guess to learn more about the person being interviewed and to find out stuff I didn't know about, like future/past projects."

"You make the interviews comfortable. I mean at times you can feel that you are there asking the questions. It feels more personal, and you're a great mag, with no bull– thrown in."

"I read COMICS INTERVIEW because it mainly deals with current *domestic* comics and creators. I quit buying THE COMICS JOURNAL because they concentrate on so much foreign garbage and pornographic comics that I got fed up with their elitist attitude. COMICS INTERVIEW is a throwback to when it was fun just to be a fan. Maybe it's because you, DAK, were once F.O.O.M.'s editor (yes, I'm that old!). I think when comics feel they have to be so darn serious and relevant that they aren't fun, something's wrong."

"COMICS INTERVIEW is fun. That's why I read it."

"In-depth interviews with some of comics' most talented people, and original pencils and inks."

"I read CI because there are some interesting interviews and as a fan you can find out about upcoming projects while reading the interview."

"I enjoy hearing how people in the comics industry feel and what they have to say."

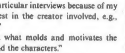
"I read COMICS INTERVIEW to keep informed of what's popular in the business at the moment, and particular interviews because of my particular interest in the creator involved, e.g., **Chester Brown.**"

"I like seeing what molds and motivates the characters behind the characters."

"In-depth interviews, great art, up-to-date information. What the hell! What comic fan who's interested in behind-the-scenes of the comics industry wouldn't buy it?"

"I dig your magazine! I've enjoyed it from the first issue and have rarely been disappointed! Just keep putting this mag out, man."

"Is this a trick question?"



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"I just finished MAUS 2 a month ago. I haven't

Here and throughout this exclusive interview, art from MAUS.

All artwork accompanying this interview is ©1992 Art Spiegelman

ART SPIEGELMAN

Shortly after being asked to interview Art Spiegelman for COMICS INTERVIEW, I discovered that my subject would be speaking at and attending the Miami Book Fair within weeks. So after many calls back and forth between me and his publicist at Pantheon, I travelled down the southernmost part of Interstate 95 from my home in Boca Raton to the fair.

Having lived here in South Florida for 15 years blissfully ignorant of the event, I was astonished to discover the range of participants — from Martin Amis to Carl Hiaasen to Erica Jongg to Spiegelman himself, promoting his latest book, MAUS 2, the conclusion to the story of his father's survival of Nazi death camps during World War II. The affair itself was quite cool, spread out over a downtown Miami college campus with rows and rows of bookstalls, exotic food and drink.

Spiegelman conducted a slide show and spoke to a packed room about MAUS in particular and comics in general. He gently explained the whys and wherefores of writing and drawing a graphic work on The Holocaust and the iconography of mice, rats and pigs, as his very pregnant wife and partner, Francoise Mouly, their daughter Nadja, and Art's stepmother Mala lis-

had the chance to find out what I need to do next."

tened attentively.

Following the presentation, Art signed books and chatted with fans as I cooled my heels and sipped papaya juice. Afterwards, I joined him at the Pantheon booth and spoke with him briefly as he autographed a devotee's huge collection of esoteric Spiegelmania.

The week after we spoke, MAUS 2 hit the NEW YORK TIMES best-seller list . . .

RICHARD PACHTER: *One thing I've noticed from reading your stuff over the years was the Kurtzman influence; especially the way MAUS is rendered. I see a lot of Kurtzman in there.*

ART SPIEGELMAN: Well, there *is* a lot of **Kurtzman** in there, including the fact that **Kurtzman** was very specific about developing a syntax for what a page structure might be. Studying his work really was my comic-book correspondence course. That's how I learned to do it and *why* to do it — even to the extent of modeling certain aspects of my career after Harvey's. I got interested in editing, working on other people's work as well as my own, and ultimately and sadly to getting chumped off by a publisher.

RICHARD: *Well, things seem to have worked out well so far for you. There's a deceptively simple style to Harvey's stuff, a* surface *simplicity, yet when you examine it a little bit more you see that it's anything* but *simple — I find that your work has that in common with his.*

ART: In all of my work now I've started using a system of drawing that's something I got from Harvey, after we met, which is building up the drawing in layers, starting with the light colors and then bringing the drawing into focus with the darker color pens. So there's a simple surface with a lot of information embedded that doesn't show.

RICHARD: *I also heard you mention Bernard Krigstein. I thought* that *was an interesting influence. Crumb was sort of obvious, not so much for the style but the freedom and the license. And Justin Green was very obvious to me as well.*

ART: Green is very important.

RICHARD: *And Harold Gray. Anyone else?*

ART: Oh, many many many. **Chester Gould** was real important to me. There's lots of stuff; I don't really know how it all synthesizes; if you like comics, you just sort of start reading them voraciously and they have a strong impact. **Carl Barks, Lyonel Feininger, Winsor McCay** — probably the usual gang of suspects.

RICHARD: *Will Eisner?*

ART: Yes, definitely.

RICHARD: *So then, this is it for MAUS?*

ART: There's no MAUS 3 or MAUS 4 — I'm dropping it now.

RICHARD: *Do you have any other extended works? I mean, this was obviously a unique thing —*

ART: Well, I'll find out if I have other extended works; I *hope* to. For a while I don't want to be drawing mice. I'd like to try something else. I *may* return to this someday and deal with other things, but that's unsure. I just finished MAUS 2 a month ago; I haven't had the chance to find out what I need to do next. After the book tour, after the book tour . . .

RICHARD: *Let's talk a little bit about comics in general. You are an editor of RAW, so you get to see a lot of material. Chances are you see a helluva lot more than what you print —*

ART: Sure.

RICHARD: *What do you think about comics in general, breaking it down in terms of the artform, in terms of the market, and in terms of the commercial end of things?*

ART: Well, in terms of the artform it's *clear* to me that we're entering something new now, and it's very promising. Comics are no longer a mass

At least fifteen foreign editions are coming out. I've gotten 4 serious offers to turn my book into a T.V. special or movie. (I don't wanna.)
In May 1968 my mother killed herself. (She left no note.)
Lately I've been feeling depressed.
MAUS
SURVIVOR'S TALE
art spiegelman

"Most of what's in comics shops I find embarrassing. I

mass medium and they are no longer even *primarily* for children — because that's the *least* of it, maybe sadly, but never-the-less accurately.

RICHARD: *Right, I agree.*

ART: So, the work that's been coming to RAW *specifically* — we now get a much higher level of submissions than we did before — so over the last ten years a certain set of ground rules of what might be expected has been there. And yet it's still a very small percentage that finds its way into print; *very* small.

Commercially, I don't know; I really don't know. I'm a little concerned about the comics shops because, quite frankly, most of what's in comics shops I find embarrassing. I don't really like to have to tell people to go to comics shops to find what *I* do; although there are *some* comics shop owners who seem to have

BUT AFTER A FEW WEEKS I GOT TOO SICK EVEN TO EAT.
TYPHUS!
I GOT VERY HOT FEVER AND I COULDN'T SLEEP. TYPHUS.
EVERY NIGHT PEOPLE DIED OF THIS.
AT NIGHT I HAD TO GO TO THE TOILET DOWN. IT WAS ALWAYS FULL, THE WHOLE CORRIDOR, WITH THE DEAD PEOPLE PILED THERE. YOU COULDN'T GO THROUGH...
YOU HAD TO GO ON THEIR HEADS, AND THIS WAS TERRIBLE, BECAUSE IT WAS SO SLIPPERY, THE SKIN, YOU THOUGHT YOU ARE FALLING. AND THIS WAS EVERY NIGHT.
SO NOW I HAD TYPHUS AND I HAD TO GO TO THE TOILET DOWN, AND I SAID, "NOW ITS MY TIME. NOW I WILL BE LAYING LIKE THIS ONES AND SOMEBODY WILL STEP ON ME!"

Rare view of Art's early rough for MAUS Chapter IX, published in RAW vol. 2 No. 2.

don't like to have to tell people to go there for what I do."

the same embarrassment that I have and structure their stores differently — but that's only a handful out of the several thousand.

RICHARD: *It's surprising, though, when you were doing the signing earlier tonight one guy was going on about how he couldn't find any copies of MAUS in Florida.*

ART: It's not true.

RICHARD: *Of course it's not true; and they've been not only in the comics shops. The comics shop people have to make a living, so if they have to sell X-MEN to pay the rent —*

ART: Yeah, but that's —

RICHARD: *What I'm saying is that it's understandable that they carry that stuff.*

ART: There's *more* comics they *don't* carry; it's not that they *want* to carry it — that's bullshit! For the most part it's only

BUT AFTER A FEW WEEKS I GOT TOO SICK EVEN TO EAT...
TYPHUS!
I GOT VERY HOT FEVER AND I COULDN'T SLEEP. TYPHUS!
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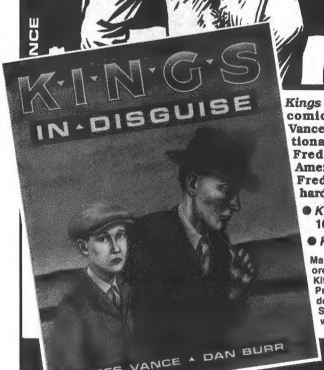
YOU HAD TO GO ON THEIR HEADS, AND THIS WAS TERRIBLE, BECAUSE IT WAS SO SLIPPERY, THE SKIN, YOU THOUGHT YOU ARE FALLING. AND THIS WAS EVERY NIGHT.
SO NOW I HAD TYPHUS, AND I HAD TO GO TO THE TOILET DOWN, AND I SAID, "NOW IT'S MY TIME. NOW I WILL BE LAYING LIKE THIS ONES AND SOMEBODY WILL STEP ON ME!"

The completed work from our previous page. (Note the subtle changes from the layout.)

"I love reading comics, but have an almost impossible time finding comics to love. *Kings* is wonderful, earnest storytelling. There are occasional infelicities in story-telling and art, but they somehow are endearing -- a book made by intelligent, caring human hands. Putting *Kings* on comic book shop racks next to most of the swill is really keeping it in disguise. I hope you can successfully 'package' it into a bookstore format when it's complete and that it can find a wider, deserving audience."

--Art Spiegelman



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"The shops are colonized by purveyors of mass fantasies."

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HUH?
MAUS
YOU'VE READ THE BOOK
NOW BUY THE VEST!
So, whaddya WANT— a bigger percentage? Hey, we can talk.
I want... ABSOLUTION. No... No... I want... I want... my MOMMY!
Could you tell our audience if drawing MAUS was cathartic? Do you feel better now?
WAH!

by necessity that the audience meets up in the comics shops, because what's mostly in those comics shops is what's peddling prepubescent male power fantasies. Some of it's in comic-book form, some of it's in the form of posters of Barbarella or Vampirella or She-Hulk or **Betty Page** — that's as close to maturity as it will rise to — so anything that's *interesting* in the comics shops is in the *margins* of the comics shops.

That can last for a while, but it's not going to last very long — because the comics shops are being colonized by the purveyors of mass fantasies much more *efficiently* than they used to be, and as a result there's *less* room for anything to exist in the margins. So, unless the comics shops find another *alternative* method of distribution, like going back to underground comix — what do we have to do, set up head shops again to find people? — or unless a more New York kind of publisher begins disseminating this kind of material, I'm not that hopeful about how this stuff finds its audience. And yet ultimately it will *have* to because there are people who are compelled to make it and there are people who seem compelled to find it — no matter what. Like this was a hard collection to gather. *(See introduction.)*

RICHARD: *Yet a lot of the comics shops will give people at least the option of ordering things, giving them order books and things of that sort. They may not* stock *a lot of material, but the distribution is there, and it's better than nothing.*

ART: Better than nothing, we agree on that. (Laughter.)

RICHARD: *But don't let me put myself in the position of defending something that's clearly indefensible.*

ART: It's fine, but I feel no more kinship with most of what fills up the comics shops than I do with what fills up a porno shop. If anything, I'm more interested in what's in porno shops. The problem for me is that it's just the kind of comics that have a different impulse behind them. But there's overlap, there's places where things shade into interesting matters for me. But a *lot* of it — the fact that it's sort of surrounded by weird science fiction, masks and stuff, that has nothing to do with me . . . "sentence trails off." *(Laughter.)*

RICHARD: *Yet the origin of your interest in the form was in ECs and horror comics and all that.*

ART: Yes.

RICHARD: *It's difficult to find something that would be the equivalent of that nowadays, other than the reprints of that stuff.*

ART: Yeah, the reprints, and that's a very important part of the future of comics, the fact that the past is becoming available again. What I'm glad about is some lost kid, or teenager or post-teenager can walk into a mall and find a copy of RAW or MAUS. I think in certain contexts that could be as big a mind-blower as MAD COMICS was for me.

RICHARD: *Absolutely, and not just kids. I gave a copy of MAUS to a friend of mine, a rabbi, and he had no interest in comics whatsoever — it was sort of ironic because his father was one of Jackie Gleason's writers and he's got bound scripts and stuff, and a wonderful appreciation of humor — but comics were alien to him and he got into it. So it can blow a mind at any level, at any age. But anyway, I was going to ask you about movie or TV adaptations, but from what you said before you have absolutely no interest in that.*

ART: Yeah. I mean, someday I may be forced into it economically, but I hope never to be backed into that corner.

RICHARD: *Is that it, you would have to be forced into doing it?*

ART: Yeah. I have no aesthetic interest in

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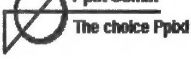


"MAUS is an example of comics as a very *personal* form."

making a film, so either somebody would have to *convince* me to do it — I just doubt it; I've thought about it — or it would have to be like something to pay for Nadja's or our future son's schooling and the only way I could do it would be to let people destroy my life's work. But it's not something that I look forward to doing, you know, 'cause films are made by committee — MAUS is an example of the fact that comics can be a very *personal* form — and I don't understand the language of film to do the translation work. So I'd have to just trust somebody else too much.

RICHARD: *Is RAW fairly successful?*

ART: Fairly. Certainly, it's selling about ten times more than any of these other alternative comics, so that's pretty good.

RICHARD: *Very good. The other thing about RAW that I think works well in its favor is that it doesn't come from a "comics publisher."*

ART: It allows for a different audience. I think Fantagraphics and **Denis Kitchen** do good work, and DRAWN 'N' QUARTERLY has a hard time finding its constituency in comics shops — that's what was getting me worked up before, you know.

RICHARD: *I find RAW really an interesting mix of old stuff and new stuff. That BOODY ROGERS strip that you ran, and the KRAZY KAT one —*

ART: *(To fan)* What happened here? You have a misbound copy.

FAN: Yes?

ART: There's no contents page.

RICHARD: *Uh-oh, extra rare!* (Laughter.)

ART: We've always had contents pages. Something's funny, but everything seems to be here so I don't understand. I know we had a contents page — Oh! Your copy is crazy! *(Laughter.)* It has two front covers and two inside back covers, and no inside front cover — sorry, I don't know how this happened. Weird.

RICHARD: *You better get your money back.* (Laughter.)

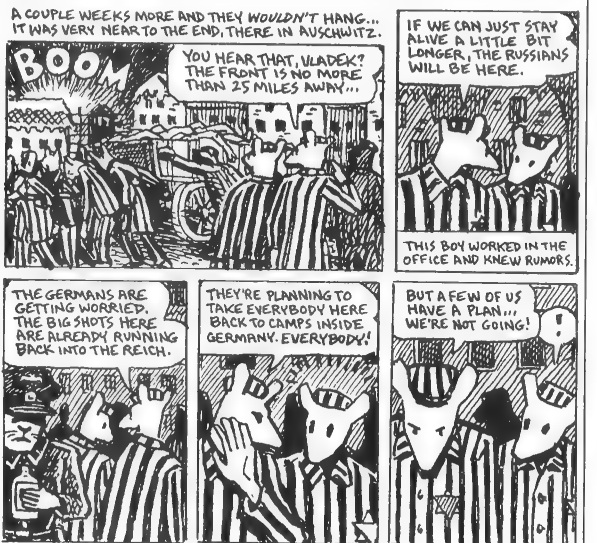
ART: I don't know if that makes it more valuable or less valuable.

RICHARD: *So, RAW will continue for a while?*

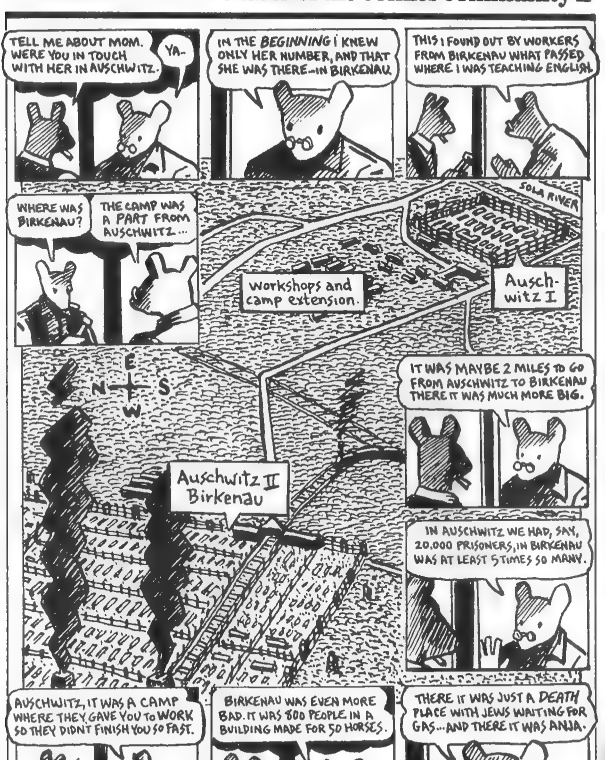
ART: Well, I don't know. After every issue we kill it, so I don't know if it will come back or not.

RICHARD: *The nature of your contract —*

ART: We just finished. I have to sign a new contract and I haven't signed one. Scared to, 'cause doing RAW is one of the more time-consuming and painful


A COUPLE WEEKS MORE AND THEY WOULDN'T HANG... IT WAS VERY NEAR TO THE END, THERE IN AUSCHWITZ.
BOOM
YOU HEAR THAT, VLADEK? THE FRONT IS NO MORE THAN 25 MILES AWAY...
IF WE CAN JUST STAY ALIVE A LITTLE BIT LONGER, THE RUSSIANS WILL BE HERE.
THIS BOY WORKED IN THE OFFICE AND KNEW RUMORS.
THE GERMANS ARE GETTING WORRIED. THE BIG SHOTS HERE ARE ALREADY RUNNING BACK INTO THE REICH.
THEY'RE PLANNING TO TAKE EVERYBODY HERE BACK TO CAMPS INSIDE GERMANY. EVERYBODY!
BUT A FEW OF US HAVE A PLAN... WE'RE NOT GOING!

"It's easier to be a member of the comics community if


TELL ME ABOUT MOM. WERE YOU IN TOUCH WITH HER IN AUSCHWITZ.
YA-
IN THE BEGINNING I KNEW ONLY HER NUMBER, AND THAT SHE WAS THERE--IN BIRKENAU.
THIS I FOUND OUT BY WORKERS FROM BIRKENAU WHAT PASSED WHERE I WAS TEACHING ENGLISH.
WHERE WAS BIRKENAU?
THE CAMP WAS A PART FROM AUSCHWITZ...
SOLA RIVER
Workshops and camp extension.
Ausch-witz I
E
N
S
W
Auschwitz II Birkenau
IT WAS MAYBE 2 MILES TO GO FROM AUSCHWITZ TO BIRKENAU THERE IT WAS MUCH MORE BIG.
IN AUSCHWITZ WE HAD, SAY, 20.000 PRISONERS, IN BIRKENAU WAS AT LEAST 5 TIMES SO MANY.
AUSCHWITZ, IT WAS A CAMP WHERE THEY GAVE YOU TO WORK SO THEY DIDN'T FINISH YOU SO FAST.
BIRKENAU WAS EVEN MORE BAD. IT WAS 800 PEOPLE IN A BUILDING MADE FOR 50 HORSES.
THERE IT WAS JUST A DEATH PLACE WITH JEWS WAITING FOR GAS... AND THERE IT WAS ANJA.

one doesn't try to do anything for it. *(Laughter.)*"

activities I've been able to find for myself.

RICHARD: *Are you teaching anymore?*

ART: No — there's another one. *(Laughter.)*

RICHARD: *Yeah, teaching's fun.*

ART: Actually, I may be teaching again. I was just talking to some people.

RICHARD: *Santa Cruz?*

ART: Yeah.

RICHARD: *Sounds pretty rugged! So, RAW is doing well but you don't know if you're going to continue or not.*

ART: Well, it's just too hard to deal with all these *nuts*, you know. There's like 40 people and I'm not speaking to any six of them in a given issue. It's much easier to be a member of the comics community if one doesn't try to do anything for it. *(Laughter.)*

RICHARD: *You've been pitched for TV, for adaptations of MAUS, but has anyone approached you about doing an original work of some sort?*

ART: Actually, I have one letter. It was kind of this letter written in frustration by some producer to my agent, saying, "Okay, so **Spiegelman** doesn't want to turn MAUS into a movie. I understand — not all roads lead to Hollywood. What kind of movie does he want to do?" I've never even had time to think if there is such a thing, and someday there *may* be. It's not what I want next, but it's not impossible — there are movies I like. I just feel that comics are a richer medium and there's very few people with any rudimentary mastery of the skills trying to make something happen in it, so I have a kind of allegiance to the medium. I may ultimately be steered away for a year, but not in the immediate future.

RICHARD: *The reviews of MAUS that I've seen have been unanimously positive. You know, "A+ in ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY."*

ART: Everybody but **Harvey Pekar** seems to like it.

RICHARD: *I haven't seen Harvey's review.*

ART: He wrote one review for a year in COMICS JOURNAL.

RICHARD: *Oh, yeah! Sure! Poor Harvey's got his own problems, though.*

ART: I didn't read all of it. *(Referring to fan's collection.)* This is like drowning. You see everything flash before your eyes. *(Laughter.)*

RICHARD: *Why is MAUS essentially "black and white?" Don't you think color would —*

ART: I've worked in color. In MAUS specifically, MAUS is about something you were talking about before, which is the economy of means. Color is one less step economically, and it would just be unnecessary. On the other hand, I *like* working with colors, so I could see doing something in color in other situations. Besides, I think one's exposure to a lot of the circumstances and events described in the book you get through these old black-and-white photographs and movies, so in that sense it feels real.

RICHARD: *Sure, World War II was in black and white.*

ART: There are a few color films, and maybe some color photos, and it's really shocking, like making it immediate again.

Like MAUS does.

Last three panels from Chapter 8. (Inserted: portraits of Mr. Spiegelman's cast.)

SIGH. IT'S SO PEACEFUL HERE AT NIGHT. IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE AUSCHWITZ EVER HAPPENED.
UH-HUH.. OUCH!
SLAP
VLADEK
BUT THESE DAMN BUGS ARE EATING ME ALIVE!
ME TOO.
PSHT
MALA
C'MON. LET'S GO INSIDE AND READ.. IT'S GETTING KINDA CHILLY OUT ANYWAY.
FRANÇOISE

"It helped to have people like Ordway and Grell do covers."

DAVID DE VRIES

David De Vries and Glenn Lumsden stand out as legends among Australian comics artists, if only because they are such a rare breed. Although they are only now gaining an international following, they were — for a time — two of the brains behind Australia's most popular comic.

De Vries created the popular band of heroes, THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON, in 1982, to satirise their American counterparts in the short-lived magazine OZ COMICS. (Devotees will note that THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON was a superhero sitcom some years before the much-acclaimed JUSTICE LEAGUE.) They next appeared towards the end of 1985 in CYCLONE!, a costumed hero magazine published by Gary Chaloner, and featuring the artwork of Glenn Lumsden and Chaloner himself.

In CYCLONE!, the Squadron shared space with Lumsden's own superhero parody, the patriotic SOUTHERN CROSS (a World War II hero), and DARK NEBULA, written by Tad Pietrzykowski and pencilled by Lumsden.

The Squadron — Nightfighter, Lt. "Smitty" Smith, the Southern Cross and the Dingo — quickly became the most popular feature of CYCLONE! and it was retitled THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON with #9 in 1987, which doubled the sales and launched the company on a path to success in Australia and New Zealand. Pietrzykowski's DARK NEBULA and Chaloner's JACKAROO followed.

When I first interviewed De Vries in

Here: The Southern Squadron as they first appeared, in OZ COMICS #1, with Nightfighter first yelling his catch phrase (which is no longer as common as it was in the early days). Fortunately, David's art has improved a bit since that time. Next page: A less primitive Squadron, as drawn by Glenn, in Nicotat's BORIS THE BEAR #25. It is fitting that they made their U.S. debut in that comic, which was also known for sending up popular comics and heroes.

All artwork accompanying this interview © 1983, 1985, 1989, 1991 and 1992 David De Vries and Glenn Lumsden

Australians had a snobbery against Australian comics."

WHAT? STRIPPERS!?
NIGHTFIGHTER, THIS IS THE LAST TIME I LET YOU CHOOSE THE BAR!
FAIR DINKUM SMITH, I HAD NO IDEA...
Written by Dave M. de Vries
LUMSDEN ART'S
THE LITTLE BEAVER
BEAVERS ARE OPEN
GOOD, LET'S FIND SOMEWHERE ELSE THEN.
C'MON SMITH! AFTER THAT RUMBLE WITH FLASH AND THE BEAR, I NEED THIS!
WHAT... A DRINK OR THE SHOW?
WELL SMITH... OREGON IS...
"THE BEAVER STATE"
LIEUTENANT SMITH
The Southern SQUADRON
THE NIGHTFIGHTER
COSTAS BORGUS, THE DINGO
THE SOUTHERN CROSS

January, 1989, he explained the extent of THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON's Australasian following. "Based on our population," he said, "I think we'd be selling something like half a million copies if we were selling to the same extent in America." Therefore, within a limited market, sales of THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON at the time were proportionately larger than those of BATMAN or THE X-MEN.

Due to Australia's relatively small population (about 17 million), however, the cash flow situation prompted De Vries and Chaloner to opt out of self-publishing and concentrate on the U.S. market. THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON (by this stage pencilled by Lumsden) was cancelled with issue #13 in 1989.

After guest appearances in First's GRIMJACK and Nicotat's BORIS THE BEAR, THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON was finally published in America in 1990. De Vries and Lumsden have since worked as a team — not only on that title, but on various other projects. Usually, De Vries writes for and colors Glenn's artwork. Stories for DC's STAR TREK and STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, and a number of new Australian projects seem to underscore the feeling of many people in the industry: we will be hearing a lot more in the future from these "boys from down under"...

MARK JUDDERY: *The success of THE SQUADRON is partially due to its familiarity as part of an established genre, even if it is tongue-in-cheek. Do you feel you mainly attracted the comics readers by presenting them with costumed heroes?*

DAVID DE VRIES: Not only that, but *Australian* costumed heroes. It also helped to have people like **Jerry Ordway** and **Mike Grell** do the covers. A lot of Australian readers who had a snobbery against Australian comics and thought, "Oh, if it's Australian it's not as good as American," were saying "Oh well, if **Jerry Ordway** likes it enough to do the cover it

"The characters all have weaknesses and bad sides."

Pleasant photo of Glenn Lumsden and David.

can't be that bad."

MARK: *Will Nightfighter ever improve?*

DAVID: No. In fact, he seems to have deteriorated issue by issue. He started out a bit of a lovable rogue, but he's become a complete bastard. You get people saying, "Gosh, I wish Southern Cross would be a little less effeminate" and "I wish Smitty would be more sarcastic." I think they really want me to do X-MEN, but the minute I do that, they won't read it. It's the very things they don't like in the characters -that keep them coming back . . .

The characters all have their own weaknesses and their bad sides, because super-powered beings are just as likely as normal people to be dickheads. Glenn and I have had endless discussions on this; we both agree that if you suddenly got super powers you wouldn't say, "I'm going to be a hero. Along with my super powers I suddenly develop this moral integrity." You wouldn't do it!

MARK: *They're doing it for money, basically?*

DAVID: Exactly. Let's face it, if you were Superman and wanted money, you'd simply go up to a construction yard and say "Okay, you want this building down? I'll rip it apart in fifteen minutes. You'll probably save a fortune in time and labour — and you can pay me ten thousand bucks."

MARK: *Australian comics have rarely been successful in the past. How did you get to this point? Was it just perseverance?*

DAVID: There are two things. One is "hanging in there," sticking to it. The other is being prepared to let the market dictate in the initial stages. Look at any rock musician and you'll inevitably find that their earliest material is very commercial. They get a name, become famous, and they can go do their own thing. Take **Sting** . . .

MARK: *Or Pink Floyd.*

DAVID: Sure. If they'd come up with their current stuff at the beginning of their careers, they would never have gotten anywhere. But because they have points on the board, people are prepared to listen to them. We found that with the Squadron. I'm not afraid to push the boundaries in different directions.

MARK: *You have projects in the pipeline with DC Comics. How do you find the other artists treat you?*

DAVID: When we were in America, we

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: David De Vries
Born: 1 May 1961
Training: B.A. in painting; life insurance rep with AMP
Major Influences: I liked the old Bob Kane BATMAN and SUPERMAN of the '40s, the format of the six- to eight-page story. The next stage was TINTIN and ASTERIX, in which each story is self-contained.

Artwise, I think my two biggest influences would be Gary Chaloner and Glenn Lumsden. I think Gary and Glenn are very much influenced by each other and also by myself.
Favorite Movie: AMADEUS
Favorite Bands: Queen, Deep Purple
First Published Work: OZ COMICS #1 (The Southern Squadron)

"We are Australians. We have an Australian perspective."

found we were treated very much as equals by the powers-that-be . . . they don't think we are "less" than they are, because we are Australians. In fact, if anything, they think that could give us a much stronger marketability.

Also they respect the fact we're not just doing SUPERMAN or BATMAN. It's easy to do an established character, with established personalities, but to actually do your own and make it work . . . I mean, how many successful characters have been created by Marvel or DC in the last few years?

In fact, **Will Eisner** said that if he was starting out again, he'd like to start out here in Australia, because it's unspoiled, untamed . . .

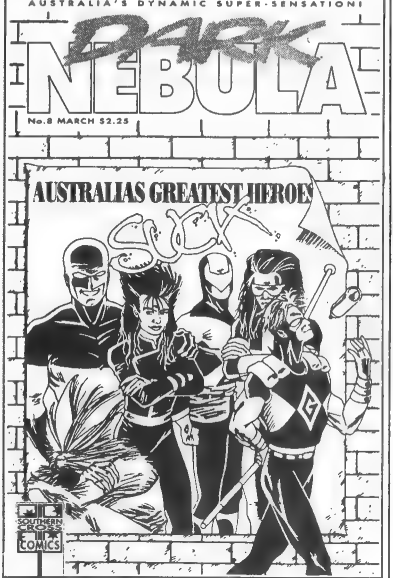
MARK: *What's the latest with your work for DC?*

DAVID: I've recently done a STAR TREK short story for the regular series. The editor was pretty happy with it. It must have created some sort of stir because someone from the film company was in the DC office and had been raving about this, to the point where every time I ring DC, they start off the conversation by saying, "G'day, Dave. Hey, I hear you did a really good STAR TREK story. Congratulations." So obviously, the word is getting around.

The important thing is, it is a DC story and it's being done from Australia. It's not like any of us had to go live in America to break in. To the best of my knowledge, it's the first time this has ever occurred. The only Australian I can think who ever got into DC, other than us, was **Shea Anton Pensa.** He actually did that by living and working out of America . . . and that's a lot easier than selling your work from across the Pacific.

MARK: *Have you found yourselves having to "Australianise" the American titles you have done?*

DAVID: America has been very good to us and ultimately, I think, is still going to be the major source of material for us — simply being the biggest English-speaking country in the world. We've found that, as a result of breaking into America — so that we didn't typecast ourselves as "the Aussies" — a lot of the material we've been proposing to the Americans, doesn't involve Australian characters. But neither Glenn nor I went into this with the intention of being American artists or writers; if we wanted to do that, we'd be living in America right now and doing it from there. We are Australians — we have an Australian perspective on the world, we see America from the outside rather than the inside, we just look at the world a little differently. It does change the way we tell the stories.



Cover to DARK NEBULA #8, by Jason Paulos and David De Vries.

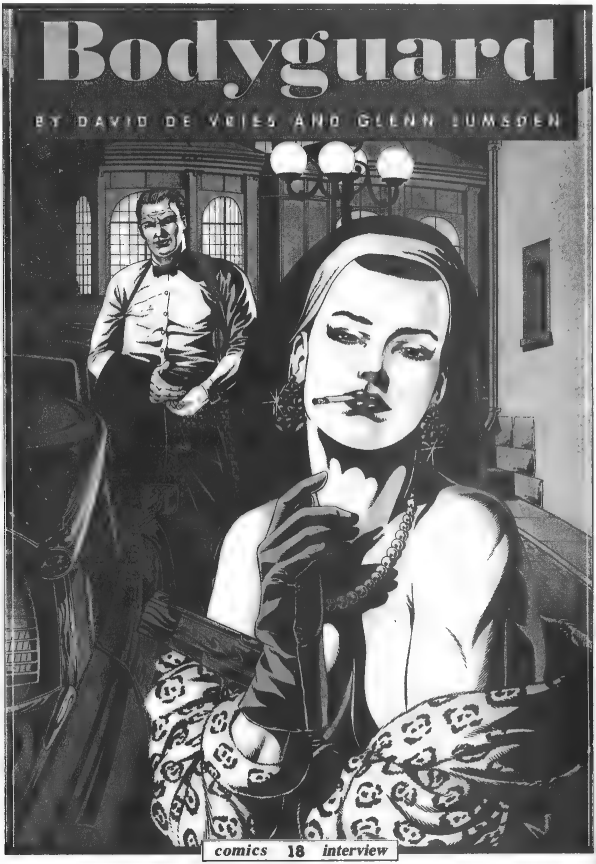
MARK: *It also gives your stories a distinct sense of sense of humour.*

DAVID: I think that is reflected in the artwork too. The sense of humour in **Gary Chaloner's** art will flow through into anything he does. In fact, for the life of me, I can't think of any projects to come out of Australia — that have been in any way really successful — which haven't had a black sense of humour attached to them.

MARK: *Would you handle a mainstream American superhero similarly to the way you handle THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON? Would you still add a fair dose of humour?*

DAVID: Let's say we do SPIDERMAN. By Australianising an American concept, we like to feel we can enrich it. But it's still very much an American idea, it's America's culture, and that is very much what Glenn and I are in this for. I think any country has a lot to offer, but I'm not a man from Zimbabwe, or a man from Ireland. They can speak for their country, I can speak for mine. We want

"Until recently, if you have Australians it's like putting in a



panda bear. It makes no sense unless you explain why."

to broaden the appeal of Australia within the rest of the world — and we're using our chosen medium of comics to do it.

Up until recently, if you have Australians in something, it's like putting in a panda bear — it doesn't make sense unless you explain why he's in there. Now — because Australians are being exposed to the U.S. market a bit more, particularly in film — people aren't saying, "Wow! An Australian! How unique!" The fact that he has an Australian accent shouldn't make any difference.

I'd just love to write, for instance, BATMAN. If there was a regular character who's an Australian, but they *don't* go on all the time about his nationality . . . just as Alfred is an Englishman. Everybody knows it, but how often is it ever mentioned? "Oh, my English butler Alfred." It just doesn't matter.

MARK: *Are you thinking Australian characters for American readers, or Australian characters for* Australian *readers? Or a bit of both?*

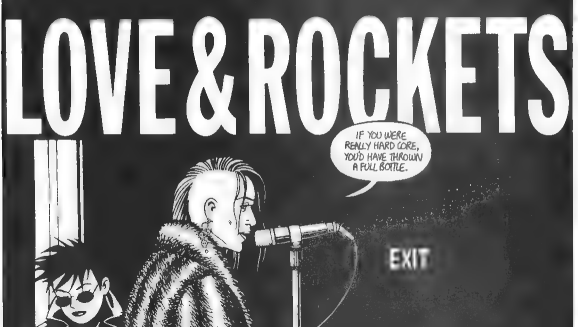
DAVID: Both, of course. We like to feel that we are contributing to Australia's culture. When we came back from our last trip to America, one of the biggest buzzes for me was when we hadn't been in the country five minutes, and the guy who was checking Glenn's passport said, "Oh, you do comics. What sort?" He said, "Oh, we do "Bodyguard." Did you see that in PENTHOUSE?" The guy went a bit pink and sort of smiled. He said, "You did that? Oh that's great, I've been reading that." Glenn pointed the ball in my direction. "Well, here's the pervert who wrote it."

That was great. When you've been overseas for a month, and the first guy you speak to in Australia knows who you are through your work, you start thinking, "Yeah, we have made a contribution to this country, in a very small way."

That's very gratifying.

Previous page: That's the cover. Here: A detail from the splash page of the same publication.

"GYMN TONIC." A MYSTIC GYM IN SYDNEY IS CONFOUNDED BY TROUBLINGHOST.
G'DAN, YOU THE BABE THAT WANTED TO SEE ME?
SHIT. IT'S YOU!
STRUTH, I DIDN'T RECOGNISE YOU WITH YOUR... ER... CLOTHES ON.
YOU KNOW, YOU SNUCK OUT SO EARLY THAT MORNING, I NEVER DID GET YOUR NAME.
CHRISTINE FOX, AND YOU'RE CLARKY LARKNEY.
GEEZE! WHAT A MEMORY! IT MUSTA BEEN OVER A MONTH AND A COUPLA DANS BEFORE CLIFF'S BIG FIGHT!
MES WELL...



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"Sooner or later, people are going to be blown away."

GLENN LUMSDEN

MARK JUDDERY: *Much of your work, recently discovered by American readers, was originally published in Australia.*

GLENN LUMSDEN: We keep all our original art in the shelves of my studio. In recent months, the artwork has been disappearing off to America. I just replace it with photocopies, so we always have a copy of everything we've done. I was just looking at it the other day when I realised that just about everything on those shelves is a photocopy. So, in other words, we've re-sold just about every scrap of art that we've ever done since we began.

Aside from being clever financially, I just find that it has a symbolic value as well. It's a very satisfying feeling to know that all the stuff you did back then not only have you been able to re-use, but now we can take stuff that we pencilled three years ago — which at the time we thought was pretty hot, but obviously in hindsight it's quite primitive. Now we're giving it a chance to really shine. There's a meeting of the old and the new there. It's like the finish of a cycle.

Sooner or later, people are going to be blown away, like we're overnight successes — which is, of course, rubbish, because we've been slogging away. Dave and I were counting the number of pages we've done over the last three years and it's well over six hundred. You learn a hell of a lot in that time.

MARK: *Do you think being Australian has had much of an impact on your*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Glenn Lumsden
Birthplace: Sydney, Australia
Training: No formal training
Favorite Movie: TERMINATOR II
Favorite Bands: Queen, The Church
First Published Work: CYCLONE! #1 (1985). (Also did layouts for Tad Pietrzykowski's DARK NEBULA in 1982)

Splash (detail) from THE SOUTHERN CROSS. Art and script by Glenn. (From DARK NEBULA #8.)

All artwork accompanying this interview ™ and © 1985, 1989, 1990 and 1992 David De Vries and Glenn Lumsden

"People think if they do something that's dark and moody,

storytelling?

GLENN: I think that, because it's Australian, Dave's storytelling has a much harder edge to it than the American stuff in general. Also, because it has that larrikin sense of humour about it, it doesn't have the quality of the British stuff — which, to me, is trying too hard to be deadly serious. You can't get away from the fact that something is a superhero comic and it is basically these weirdos running around in tights looking a bit foolish. When you take yourself too seriously you can fall into the same trap as when you just write fluff. I think that gives Australia a unique voice and I think Dave's a great exponent of that voice.

MARK: *How important is the humour?*

GLENN: Humour is such a part of reality. I reckon most people spend maybe eight percent of their day either laughing or being happy. To remove all traces of humour from life is being terribly unrealistic. I think it sometimes gets mistaken for realism in America. People think if they do something that's dark and moody, and no one laughs, that somehow it's being realistic. But it's not at all.

MARK: *Do you agree with Dave's comments that you stand a danger of being typecast by your nationality?*

GLENN: Yeah, because . . . there are just so many creative teams out there, that I think it's just a natural reaction. You tend to sort people into groups and say, "oh yeah, they're the horror writers," or, "They're the superhero guys." Dave and I are doing a bit of a jig trying to avoid that at the moment, because our history in Australia has been one of tailor-making comics to suit magazine requirements. I

Southern Cross — who bears no relation to his namesake in THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON — was created by Glenn as one of three features in CYCLONE, as a send-up of Golden-Age comic books and radio serials.

MAKE SURE HE'S TIED GOOD AND PROPER!
SOUTHERN CROSS... @*%!&!
SO LONG, SUCKER
SPLASH
THE SOUTHERN CROSS THROWN INTO THE HARBOUR! HOW CAN HE SURVIVE?
???
ON AIR
FIND OUT TOMORROW NIGHT IN PART TEN OF... "THE SOUTHERN CROSS"... PROUDLY SPONSORED BY GUDGELLI'S WHIPPED BABY FAT!

and no one laughs, that's being realistic. But it's not at all."

BULLSHIT, MATE!
"THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON'S" AUSSIE'S TOP SELLING ACTION-ADVENTURE COMIC... WE SHIT IT IN OVER ANN OF THE SCPO IMPORTS...
THAT'S GOIYA MAKE THE SQUADRON NUMERO UNO!
PIG'S BUM!!
AUSSIE PENTHOUSE'S SALES CREAM ANY COMICS ANYWHERE ANYTIME!
AND THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND "BODYGUARD".
FACE IT, MATE, MOST BLOKES'D RATHER LOOK AT SEXY SHEILAS THAN ROOFS IN A MUSK AN' A PAIR OF LONG JOHNS!
YEAH!? WELL IN OUR MAG THEY CAN SEE BOTH!!
G'ARN THEN, PROVE IT?

Ad art for "Australia's most widely-read comic adventure." The series is BODYGUARD, by De Vries and Lumsden.

know there are people in Sydney who still think of us as being superhero guys. But in the past three years, there's been a lot more horror, a lot more cheesecakey stuff. I actually draw more pages with truck drivers on them than with superheroes. Dave and I are quite proud of the fact that we're jacks of many trades.

MARK: *Some of your recent stuff could perhaps be described as soft porn. Are you pleased with that tailor-making?*

GLENN: Something Dave and I would like to work on, both in America and in Australia, is updating the general public's view of comics. A number of times a year, you get this knee-jerk reaction from people who haven't read a comic in thirty years and just immediately feel affronted that you could have the word "shit" in a comic. The message that's got to get across is: Yes, you can still buy kiddies' comics. Your eight-year-old can still buy those nice, innocent comics that, in your mind, are *comics*. But for the people who have grown up in the meantime, there are comics for them, as well. You're constantly coming up against this wall of ignorance, where people say, "You can't do that, it's corrupting youth," or, "That's not the way comics *should* be." If anyone in Australia should know how comics should be, it's Dave and I, because over the last three years, we've churned out more comic pages than any other Australian that I know of.

MARK: *What's coming up for FULL THROTTLE?*

GLENN: There are changes of style in the "Raw Tonnage" strip. INTERSTATER magazine — the Australian truckie magazine which publishes "Raw Tonnage" — has been absorbed into another magazine called REDBACK. It's going to be a much more general magazine. We have changed "Raw Tonnage" to "Raw Deal;" it has the same characters. INTERSTATER was a real cheesecakey magazine. REDBACK is not. It's more family-man, working-class oriented. We just turned down the cheesecake dial. It's an example of how you can change the strip so it's tailor-made. We don't have any great philosophical or ethical problems with "bastardising" our characters to conform to an editor's wishes.

MARK: *Despite your track record, is there a temptation to regard comics as a "down-market" medium?*

GLENN: Just in terms of how much money you can get back on a comic, I'll bet they made a hell of a lot more out of that **Jim Lee's** X-MEN that sold six or seven million than a hell of a lot of films which just die in the arse. There are a lot of movies that don't make money. So as far as the business propositions are concerned, comics should be taken seriously.

We are talking serious money. When **Todd McFarlane** got his first royalty check for SPIDER-MAN #1, he would

"When Dave gives me a story, I try to put myself in his

WELCOME BACK AGAIN MY DARLING... THIS IS BECOMING SOMETHING OF A HABIT...
I'M SO SORRY MY LITTLE ELSA. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE YOU.
THE SERUM WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH..
IT NEEDED THOSE EXTRA DAYS..
AND YOU AND "LITTLE ANDRE" HERE COULDN'T WAIT.
...AND MORE THAN I..
I'M AFRAID MY TIME HAS CAUGHT UP..
AGAIN
NO SON, I DON'T REGRET BEING AWOKEN.
PERHAPS IT JUST WASN'T MEANT TO BE...
OHHH I FEEL SO TIRED

shoes, to 'feel' the story, to understand the point behind it."

Previous page: PUPPET MASTER is thought by many to have transcended the B-grade film upon which the first issue was based. Here: More of Lumsden's Southern Cross character, an early version.

have been set for life. You could buy a couple of houses with that.

MARK: *Several artists complain that the writer competes with them, or vice versa. You and Dave, however, are a writer/artist team which works extremely well together. What's the secret behind your successful marriage?*

GLENN: It's the big picture. When Dave gives me a story, I try to put myself in his shoes and I try to "feel" the story, to understand the whole driving point behind it. And if I feel that that story could be better served with lots of long-shots — with lots of crowd scenes and things which are tedious to draw — than with a couple of squizzy panels of Spider-Man swinging around a rooftop, then I will do the long-shots. In the short term, you maybe sacrifice the immediate limelight of being regarded as a real squizzy artist, but in the long term, you're a better storyteller.

RICH: "Why would David Anthony Kraft want me to

HARRY BROERTJES

Harry Broertjes, though mild-mannered and bespectacled like another well-known newspaperman, is one of the most important, pivotal figures in comics fandom. Along with several cohorts, he participated in the organization of the apa (amateur press alliance) INTERLAC and helped focus attention on THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES at a time when the series was moribund. The attention generated by this not only kept the series alive, but maintained fan interest through ever-changing editorial and creative teams, and helped establish the LEGION as one of the cornerstones of modern comics.

His other major accomplishment is the rediscovery of Jim Shooter. After spending several years as a prepubescent comics scripter for DC's legendary "Uncle" Mort Weisinger, Shooter had retreated from the business and worked a series of ordinary, mere-mortal jobs in his native Pittsburgh, a far cry from such

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Harry Broertjes
Born: 19 December 1953 — Jacksonville, NC
Residence: Hollywood, Florida
Occupation: Copy editor and page designer for Gary Hart's favorite newspaper, THE MIAMI HERALD
Education: Bachelor's and master's in journalism from Northwestern
Favorite comics: LEGION OF SUPERHEROES, Superman titles, JUSTICE LEAGUE, SANDMAN, MIRACLEMAN, JIMMY OLSEN
Last book read: YAMATO, by Ken Kato
Next in line: LYNDON JOHNSON: MEANS OF ASCENT, by Robert Caro
Guilty pleasures: Fox's MARRIED WITH CHILDREN, The Red Hot Chili Peppers
Ambition: To live long enough to see the Cubs win the World Series

interview you?" HARRY: "That's an unfair question."

exciting locales as Smallville and Metropolis, the homes of Superboy and Superman, whose exploits he had once chronicled.

When Harry helped return Shooter to DC, he put him on the path to his high-profile role as editor-in-chief at rival Marvel, a position he assumed after several other folks moved in and out of the job over a period of months. At the height of Shooter's controversial but productive regime, when asked who he relied upon for objective critiques, Harry Broertjes was the name Shooter cited without hesitation.

Today, Harry, a bachelor, lives in Miami and is an editor at Gary Hart's favorite publication, THE MIAMI HERALD. Still active in fandom, Harry has, of late, become a born-again Macintosh computer addict. He works long hours at the HERALD and has an impeccable reputation as a solid, loyal, dependable person who is an island of calm and reason in the middle of the hurricane that is daily journalism.

Personally, he's a great, close friend, and is adored by my kids, who call him "Uncle Harry." He's the doting godfather of my youngest child, Ray.

A friend and confidant of the current LEGION OF SUPERHEROES creative team, Harry is a well-respected, honest, passionate individual, who definitely has a life outside of comics.

He also makes great fudge brownies!

RICH PACHTER: *The first question would have to be, why would David Anthony Kraft want me to interview you?*

HARRY BROERTJES: That's an unfair question.

RICH: *Let me give you my answer. I think it is because you're one of the founding fathers of Legion fandom, long-time publisher of the late, great LEGION OUTPOST, the man who dragged Jim Shooter out of oblivion and back into comics.*

HARRY: I sort of helped drag him out. I didn't do it all by myself.

Art by John Byrne for the never-published LEGION OUTPOST #11 — 1982.

All artwork accompanying this interview ©1982 DC Comics, Inc., unless otherwise noted.

"I was in APA-5 with Mark Verheiden, Paul

RICH: *Let's not cover this up, it's too late; the toothpaste is out of the tube.*
HARRY: I know, but I don't want the pickets out in front of my house, either.
RICH: *I know what you mean. If this gets out, you could end up being the Salman Rushdie of comics fandom.* (Laughter.) *What do you do for a living?*
HARRY: I work for THE MIAMI HERALD. I'm a copy editor and page designer for the Fort Lauderdale local section. What I do is edit reporters' stories. I also lay out the section two or three days a week. That's about it. I have pretty much enough stress there with my alleged 40 hours a week, which is more like 45 or 50 hours a week.
RICH: *Your fanac or fan activities are limited to apa stuff these days?*
HARRY: Pretty much, INTERLAC. I was in CAPA-alpha for thirteen, fourteen years. And I was a founding member of INTERLAC in 1976. I was in APA-5 for awhile, years ago with **Mark Verheiden, Paul Chadwick, Frank Miller** and other people who ended up being successful in the business, a lot more successful than I was . . .
RICH: *Well, you really don't want to be in the business . . .*
HARRY: That's the thing. I never really wanted to get into the business.
RICH: *You certainly had your opportunity, considering all of the heavy folks you knew and still know today.*
HARRY: Yeah, **Shooter** tried to hire me as an editor at Marvel a couple of times. I didn't do it for a couple of reasons: One, the longer I lived in Florida — and I moved to Florida in 1976 — the less I wanted to live in the New York area. Partly because of the weather, partly because of the cost of living. The other reason is because comics are fun. Comics are a hobby, things I do in my spare time. They're a diversion. I wouldn't enjoy them nearly as much if I had to make a living doing them.
RICH: *You're originally from Indiana?*
HARRY: I consider Indiana where I grew up. I was born in North Carolina, and my father was in the Marine Corps. I lived in North Carolina, Virginia, and three years in Japan. When we came back to the States my father retired from the Marine Corps and we moved to Indiana so that he could go back to college. He got his master's and his doctorate. I pretty much did my growing up in Bloomington, Indiana, from the time I was eight years old up until the time I got out of high school. With the exception of one year in Carbondale, Illinois.
RICH: *So, along with such other prominent people as David Letterman and*

Cover for INTERLAC, 1987 — it's one of the rejected covers for LEGION #1, third series. And an INTERLAC cover from 1978 by Jim Chadwick, now at DC.

Chadwick, Frank Miller and other people."

Jane Pauley, you're pretty much a Hoosier.

HARRY: Yeah, and **Roger Stern** and **Bob Layton.**

RICH: *When did you first start reading comics?*

HARRY: I've been reading comics as long as I can remember. The first comics I remember reading was a WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES when I was four or five years old and we were in Japan. I know that's what it was because I found that comic at a comic convention about ten years ago. I read a lot of duck stuff and I guess the Harvey books. I went to an international school in Tokyo, which was about an hour and a half drive each way. People always brought along comic books and we would read them and pass them around on the bus. I could bring a dozen comics on the bus and leave the bus with a different dozen comics.

RICH: *Any superhero comics?*

HARRY: Sure. I remember the early JIMMY OLSENs, SUPERMAN. I remember that I saw the "Jimmy Olsen, Turtle Boy" story, this was about 1960. I remember that cover because the cover scared the shit out of me. I mean, here's this giant guy standing over a bridge, ready to tear it apart . . .

RICH: *He had big bug eyes, too, which were unlike any turtle eyes I'd ever seen. He was in a harbor and Superman was like, "Great Scott, Jimmy's become a giant turtle boy!"* (Laughter.)

HARRY: I remember that cover because at the time it really scared me, a new concept there. Something that hit my imagination.

RICH: *So you were reading a variety of comics at the time. You weren't Mr. Superhero or anything like that. What did your parents think about your comics reading?*

HARRY: They didn't care one way or the other. It was fine with them; they never really said anything about it. Later on when I was in junior high my father used to borrow some of my comics from me for bedtime reading.

RICH: *So you got an allowance from them and they didn't care if you bought comics with it? That's great. You didn't have to read them under the covers with a flashlight like somebody I know?*

HARRY: No, that was the way I read PLAYBOY later on. *(Laughter.)*

RICH: *Let's put this in context: How did you discover fandom? Most kids read comics and then after a time they stop or else they meet other fans that read comics and keep reading. At what point did that happen to you?*

HARRY: I think I was aware that there was an organized fandom in about 1966 when I saw a reference in a **Julius Schwartz** letter column to RBCC. I thought, "OK, that's kind of interesting," and I sent off like 35 cents for a copy.

RICH: *That was THE ROCKET'S BLAST/COMICOLLECTOR.*

HARRY: Right, I think **G.B. Love** was involved, and it was down in Miami at the time. It was a merger of THE ROCKET'S BLAST and THE COMICOLLECTOR. I got this mimeographed thing through the mail a couple of weeks later and there were ads for old comics. Old comics at the time were about five or six years old. It was the first time I was aware that people collected and traded comics and talked to each other about it. I started saving my comics about 1964 or so.

RICH: *What did you do with them before that? Give them to sick kids or throw them out?*

HARRY: Yeah, threw them out. I remember taking some to school once for a charity thing. Most of them got thrown out — it was disposable reading. I would read one once and I never really had much of a desire to ever read them again.

RICH: *Unlike comics today which are disposable reading but you're supposed to hold onto them . . .*

HARRY: Right around 1964 something changed, but I'm not really sure what it was because by that point I started to gravitate more towards the **Weisinger** SUPERMAN comics. I'd pick up the occasional BATMAN, JUSTICE LEAGUE, and FLASH. At that point, though, I was really into the SUPERMAN family comics. I can pinpoint when I started collecting them because that's where my collection today starts.

RICH: *Your collection, as opposed to books you just read.*

HARRY: Right, my collection, and I don't think I've given away or traded a superhero book since then. Getting back to the fandom thing, I was first aware of it around 1966 but I didn't pay much attention to it because at the time I wasn't heavily into comics to the point that I wanted to find back issues. I did keep buying and saving comics and that went all the way through high school. I was buying maybe six or seven comics a month.

RICH: *Did the other kids think you were weird for reading comics; girls make fun of you, things like that?*

HARRY: No, no, for two reasons. One, my friends read the occasional comic too. And two, back then it was something that never came up. Today somebody might ask you about your hobby, "What do you do in your spare time?" I can say, "I read comics, I collect comics, I write about comics." Back then it was the SUPERMAN family of books, JUSTICE LEAGUE, I never really got into Marvels back then.

RICH: *Did you have friends that were Marvel fans? Was there a sort of push and pull between them? I remember growing up reading Marvel and DC but basically my allegiance was with DC. The Marvel guys were making a point of really putting down the DC stuff. Did you ever experience any of that?*

HARRY: No, about the only time I did was when I was in the seventh grade and I mentioned to a friend about a comic I had seen and he said about what you

"I thought maybe we could lean on DC a little

said, "DC, forget that, Marvel is what you should be into." I wasn't really too interested in Marvel. I was aware of fandom. I got the one RBCC issue and thought, "Oh, that's nice," and I put it away."

RICH: *Do you remember any of the articles?*

HARRY: I don't know that there were too many articles. I do remember that there was an **Alan Weiss** drawing of **Captain America** in it. Beyond that I don't remember too much about it. I would have to go look it up, and I know that I have it somewhere. That's one of those things that I hung onto and never got rid of. It probably wasn't until after the infamous **Mike Flynn** letter appeared in SUPERBOY in 1971 that I really started to become aware of the true extent of fandom.

RICH: *Mike Flynn was probably best known to the comic-reading public as the DC public relations person in the 1980s.*

HARRY: Mike had a letter in SUPERBOY in 1971. I was a freshman in college. I had come home from college for Christmas and I picked that book up. The letter basically said, "Well, I'm a fan of Legion and I miss **Jim Shooter** and I bet there are a lot of people out there like me who are disappointed in the fact that LEGION is no longer in ADVENTURE or ACTION COMICS. This is when it shifted over to becoming an irregular feature in SUPERBOY.

RICH: *Who was writing it at the time, Cary Bates?*

HARRY: Right, and **George Tuska** was drawing it. Getting back to the letter, it was basically, "I would like to form a Legion fan club, and here's the address." The timing was really great because I really liked the Legion comic. I was aware of **Jim Shooter.** They talked about the writer in the letters page; at that time there were no credits in the series. The fellow actually doing the letter column said, "Well, we discovered **Jim Shooter,** a young kid out of Pittsburgh and he's writing the Legion for us." I mean, thirteen years old and doing his first story, I thought, "Gee, that's cool, he's only a couple of years older than me and here he is doing this." The Legion had captured my imagination. So when I saw Mike's letter I thought, "Yeah, gee, let's see what we can do." A fan club where we can get in touch with other fans. I thought maybe we could lean on DC a little bit to get the Legion its book back again. And so I wrote back to Mike. If that letter had appeared two months later or earlier — if I was in the middle of school instead of home on vacation, I may not have even though about responding to him.

RICH: *That was a really fateful cusp in history.*

HARRY: Yeah, it really was. Mike and I joke about it — what if he had had a splitting headache that day and the letter had never been written and it would never have been published.

RICH: *So you guys started writing back and forth. What happened after that?*

HARRY: Well, it turned out that quite a few guys responded to Mike's letter. **Rich Morissey,** who was a major letterhack at the time. **Jay Zilber** was another. Mike had dozens of responses from that one letter. Several months later we talked about doing THE LEGION OUTPOST. In June of 1972 the first issue of THE LEGION OUTPOST went out to some 200-plus people.

RICH: *That was done by you, Jay and Mike?*

HARRY: Jay was in high school in Columbus, Ohio. Mike was still in high school in the Bronx and I was off at college at Northwestern.

RICH: *So the three of you, from different parts of the country, managed to put this together. How was this put together?*

HARRY: It was actually printed . . .

RICH: *You were a journalism major at Northwestern.*

HARRY: Not that that really had anything to do with it. *(Laughter.)*

RICH: *It helped to give you a bit of orientation of doing it in the semi-professional manner.*

HARRY: Semi-professional would be a good way to describe it. I just took it over to Northwestern Printing and Duplicating and got it printed up there.

RICH: *What was your press run?*

HARRY: Approximtely 250. I remember that there were very few left over after I sent them out.

RICH: *What was the contents of the first issue?*

HARRY: It's been so long since I looked at it that I can't remember if there was any art in it — there may have been. This was back in 1972. Mike had an article talking about what we hoped to do with the fan club. I had a little piece introducing myself. There was a fan by the name of **George Vincent** who goes by the name **Black Wolf** now. He's an American Indian who lives in upstate New York. He had an article in it.

RICH: *Was it publicized in the DC letter pages?*

HARRY: Eventually it was. I don't think the first one was. We immediately made plans to do further issues. **Murray Boltinoff,** who was the editor of SUPERBOY at the time, was very good about giving us free space to publicize it. They printed the addresses and told people to write to us.

RICH: *How many issues of the OUTPOST were there? What was the frequency of publishing it?*

HARRY: Infrequency would be a better word. We had intentions of being bi-monthly. We were never able to hold to any schedule. Ultimately there were ten issues. The first nine were published between 1972 and 1976. Four or five years later a tenth issue was done.

RICH: *I remember that last issue.*

HARRY: Right, we knew each other by then . . .

RICH: *I used to see it every time I would*

bit to get the Legion its own book back again.

go over to Kurt Goldzung's comic store. He left it there . . .

HARRY: It was probably still there when he closed the store and went off to First Comics because I gave him like five copies to sell, and he sold maybe two. There could be an eleventh issue. We're coming up on the 20th anniversary of Legion fandom and Mike and I and several other people, **Ken Gale, Mike Valerio,** people who were involved in the founding of Legion fandom, were talking about having a reunion in the summer of 1992.

RICH: *That would be fabulous considering there's a new LEGION book now and a new generation of Legion fans.*

HARRY: Probably several generations of new Legion fans.

RICH: *So THE LEGION OUTPOST was well received. This was back in the days when fanzines were not professionally produced. Fanzines and fan art were just flourishing. Unlike today, where if you are a fan artist you can put out your own comic book.*

HARRY: It's really kind of a shame. In the mid-'70s I was really into fanzines. I recall that in the mid-'70s **Fredric Wertham** wrote a book about fanzines, talking about how it was a new form of communication. He was absolutely right on that score. And I think that what has happened is that technology caught up with us. Come the end of the '70s and the early '80s, computers, CompuServe, everybody drops in and offers their two cents' worth.

RICH: *You're absolutely right. Today the fanzines seem to be professional fanzines, whatever you want to call them, but very little in the form of fan fanzines, where some guy with a mimeo machine types up and produces a fanzine. There were some great ones: MEN OF MYSTERY by our friend Jeff Gelb, RBCC, COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY, THE COMIC READER . . .*

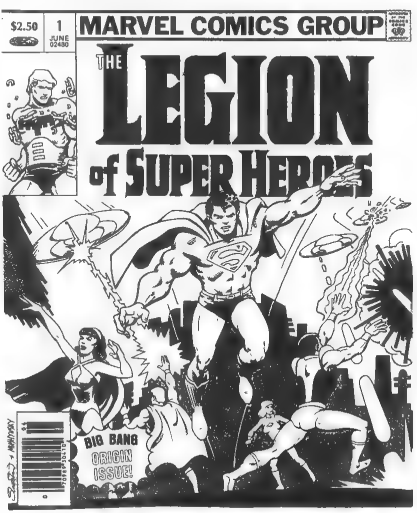
HARRY: I think they still owe me some issues. *(Laughter.)*

RICH: *I was really sorry to see* that *one fold.*

HARRY: Even in that case, in the '70s even THE COMIC READER was considered a semi-pro fanzine.

RICH: *It was great! John Byrne used to write his letters speculating about Superman's powers. Let's talk a little about Jim Shooter. You had started doing THE LEGION OUTPOST more or less as a look back at those halcyon days of when Shooter was writing*

Front and back cover from the last LEGION OUTPOST. Back cover drawn by Jim Shooter — "What if Marvel published the Legion of Super Heroes?"



"I got a number for a Kenneth Shooter in Pennsylvania.

Legion. But then Shooter was out of comics. what happened? Did you search out Shooter to find out what he was up to?

HARRY: I did. We had done three or four issues of THE OUTPOST by 1973 and people were talking about how those were great days, the late '60s. They were everyone's favorite stories, those Legion stories by **Shooter.**

RICH: *Illustrated by Curt Swan.*

HARRY: Right, they were the definitive Legion team as far as everyone was concerned. So I thought, "Gee, I have to find **Shooter,** do an interview with him, do something for the OUTPOST." It only made sense, since we couldn't do it with **John Forte** — he was dead. **Edmond Hamilton,** who wrote a lot of the early stories, no one was really aware of, so there was no urgency.

RICH: *Otto Binder . . .*

HARRY: Otto Binder wrote the first Legion story, in ADVENTURE #247. A lot of those people I was never aware of until **Neal Pozner** did his LEGION HANDBOOK in about 1975. By 1972, 1973, I became familiar with a few people at DC, including **Nelson Bridwell,** who I interviewed for a story that I wrote for my hometown newspaper in Indiana my first year out of college. I called him up at one point and I said, "You ever hear what happened to **Jim Shooter?"** Nelson said that nobody knew what happened to him and nobody had an address for him. Here and there I put out some feelers trying to track him down. Eventually, by way of **Bill Schelly,** a fan who did a fanzine called SENSE OF WONDER in Pennsylvania, I found out that Jim had either done an article for him or had been interviewed by him after he left comics. Oddly enough, and totally by accident, I finally met Bill for the first time when I was out in Seattle this past September. By that means, back in 1974, I found out that **Shooter** was still in the Pittsburgh area. Then it was just a matter of calling Directory Assistance and getting a phone number. I ended up with a phone number

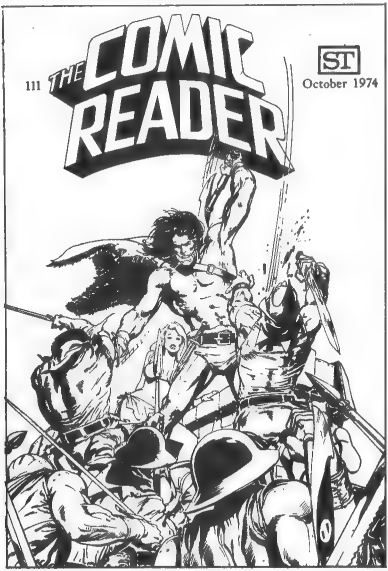
As Harry said, even THE COMICS READER was considered a semi-pro fanzine in the '70s. Here,

The lady who answered turned out to be Jim's mother."

for a **Kenneth Shooter** in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, and the lady who answered the phone turned out to be Jim's mother. Jim wasn't home, but she told me to call later, which I did. I talked to Jim and we set up an interview. We did the interview by phone and ran it in LEGION OUTPOST #8, which came out in the fall of 1974. I did the interview around May or June of that year. That summer I was doing an internship at THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR because I was living there at the time. At one point **Jay Zilber** and his family were driving through, so we made plans to get together. We ended up making friends and made plans to go out to New York and meet **Mike Flynn** for the first time, to meet **Mercy Van Vlack** for the very first time. Mercy was one of the original OUTPOST people and had done some illustrations for us. I guess it was August of 1974, my internship was up, I went to Columbus and picked up Jay and then we drove on east. I talked to Jim in the meantime, and we stopped by to meet him. We wanted to meet this icon from our youths. We got close to the city and called Jim for directions, and he told us to stay put, that he would come and get us. So here comes this guy on a motorcycle, a real tall guy, and we said hi and followed him back to his house. I was astounded at how tall he was. He used to say that he was five foot nineteen. *(Laughter.)* We got to his house and spent the afternoon talking about the Legion, about comics. He pulled out some original artwork that he had, and it really stunned me — he had some beautiful **Swan** pages, including one which I have wanted for years which was the final page of the first issue of the Mordru story, where this giant Mordru is towering over four Legionnaires. A beautiful piece of art by **Swan** and inked, I believe, by **Jack Abel**. Jim told us about his days with **Mort Weisinger** and about what he had done when he left the business.

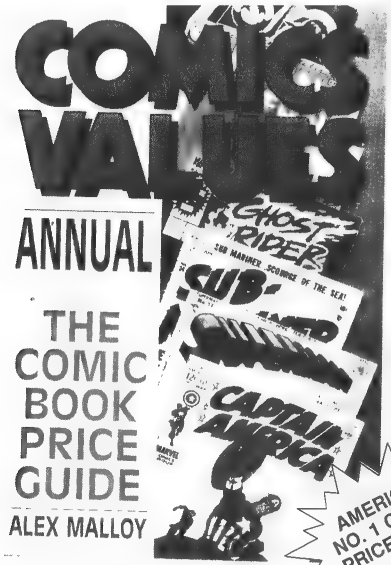
RICH: *Did he speak kindly of Mort*

we give you three covers from that slick mini-zine. Covers by Simonson, Rogers and Neal Adams.



COMICS VALUES ANNUAL

"The Final Word in Comic Collecting"



A Chilton Books Publication

Golden Age Comics and Expanded Marvel & DC Listings
Ron Goulart on "Concerning the Golden Age"
International & Comix Listings
Available in June at Bookstores and Comic Shops

"A Hoosier driving through the Bronx, cabbies honking."

Weisinger? The reason I ask is that Mort is regarded by fans very sympathetically whereas people who worked for him had less kind things to say about him . . . In particular Wayne Boring . . .

HARRY: Jim would be a better person to answer that question than I. I remember that when he spoke of Mort he had a very deep respect for him. I don't think those two saw eye to eye. I think if they had seen eye to eye, Jim would not have gone over to Marvel Comics around 1970. And then he worked there for all of two weeks before coming back to Pittsburgh. Mort was clearly a big influence on Jim.

RICH: *After you met Shooter, then what?*

HARRY: Then we went on to New York and went to the Bronx. It was my first time driving in New York City. *(Laughter.)* Yeah, right, here's a Hoosier boy trying to drive through the Bronx with cabbies honking at me. We got to Mike's place, and we picked up Mercy along the way; **Rich Morrissey** was already there. The next day we all took the subway down to DC and met everyone involved with the Legion at DC — **Cary Bates, Mike Grell.** We walked around the offices and met everyone there. This is when they were still over on Third Avenue.

RICH: *So you hung out with the people at DC for a while. It must have been exciting but also slightly disappointing at the same time. They're just in another office building . . .*

HARRY: I think I was sufficiently stunned enough from meeting everyone involved with producing Legion and the people involved with Legion fandom, and being in New York for the first time. I met people there, **Nelson Bridwell, Julius Schwartz,** people whom I really had grown up with.

RICH: *Sort of like surrogate parents.* (Laughter.)

HARRY: Yeah, something like that.

RICH: *What happened with Jim Shooter after your meeting? Did he decide to get back into comics because of all of the interest?*

HARRY: Jim and I kept in touch. Actually, I started calling Jim very frequently after that. I think there were times when he got tired of talking with this babbling fan on the phone because after a half hour, 45 minutes, he would say, "Boy, this must be costing you a lot of money." I wanted to keep on talking so I lied to him and told him it was a WATS line at the university, that we got to use it to call home, so don't worry, it doesn't cost me anything. I picture him on the other line just rolling his eyes and then continuing to talk with me.

RICH: *He was working in advertising then?*

HARRY: I guess there was some advertising work. I know that he was totally gone from working in comics. After I talked to him, I told people at DC, "I talked with **Jim Shooter,"** and they would say, "Really, where's he at, what's he doing?" So I told them what was going on, and a few people said, "Gee, we could really use him back in the business, we could really use some good writers now." I told that to Jim, but he really didn't seem too interested in pursuing it. Later on I met **Bob Layton** and **Roger Stern** —they both lived in Indianapolis. This was around 1973 or so, before either of them were in the business. At the time they were part of what was known as the CPL gang. And that was **Stern, Bob Layton, Duffy Vohland** and, sort of as an associate member, **John Byrne.** They had talked to Duffy about it and one day Duffy called me up and he was really curious about **Shooter.** He said J m really needed to come back into the business, and I agreed. I guess he asked me for Jim's phone number and I gave it to him. Duffy called Jim and pretty soon Jim was out in New York City talking to the people at DC and Marvel. He got a couple of assignments from DC, and that was his first step back into comics.

RICH: *He came back to DC and wrote some Legion stuff for them. Some Superman stuff too, I believe.*

HARRY: Right, he wrote some Superman stories and also put in some proposals for JUSTICE LEAGUE that didn't go anywhere. He worked with Murray on the Legion and Julie on Superman.

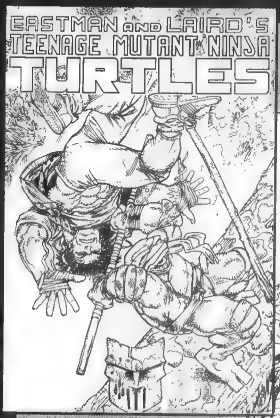
RICH: *And then Roy Thomas lured him over to Marvel?*

Great Moments in Fan History . . .

INTERLAC 14

INTERLAC *cover*, 1978

JULY RELEASES
FROM MIRAGE PUBLISHING



SPACE USAGI
Part 2 of 3
Stan Sakai

TMNT #49
SHADES OF GREY Part 2
Eastman, Laird,
Lawson, & Aiken

MIRAGE PUBLISHING

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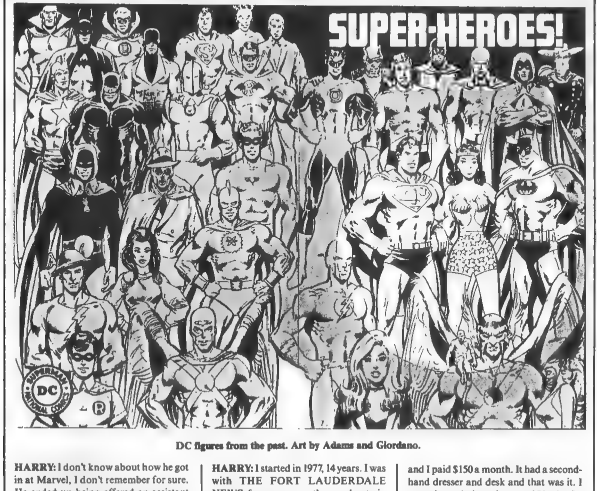
"I rented an uninsulated bungalow, mattress on the floor."



DC figures from the past. Art by Adams and Giordano.

HARRY: I don't know about how he got in at Marvel, I don't remember for sure. He ended up being offered an assistant editor's job at Marvel, and that started in 1976. At the time I was out of college and working on the newspaper at Middletown, New York. New Year's night, 1976, Jim, **Debbie Fix**, who later went on to immortality in the STAR BRAND comic, and **Ken Klaczak** came in and stayed for a couple of days. And then Jim went down to New York and started as an assistant editor at Marvel.

RICH: *At the time Roy Thomas was editor-in-chief, and then he left. Then they went through Gerry Conway, Len, Marv, Archie, and then when Archie left Jim became the editor-in-chief or whatever his title was. Meanwhile, you had graduated from college with a degree in journalism and were working for a newspaper as a copy editor.*

HARRY: Yes. I also did a little reporting right out of college, and then I gravitated pretty quickly to copy editor. And that's where I have been ever since.

RICH: *And how long have you been at THE MIAMI HERALD?*

HARRY: I started in 1977, 14 years. I was with THE FORT LAUDERDALE NEWS for seven months — about six and a half months too long. It was basically a small-time paper in a big city, and all kinds of sleazy, slimy no-accounts were working there. When I came down to Florida I had written to THE HERALD because I wanted to get a job there, but they said they didn't have any openings at the time. It turned out that THE LAUDERDALE NEWS did. So I took the job there. After a couple of weeks on the job I was sending letters back down to Miami again.

RICH: *Besides the obvious (the South Florida weather) what was the big draw to Florida?*

HARRY: The weather was pretty much it. I grew up in Indiana and delivered newspapers in eighteen inches of snow on winter mornings and I was used to cold and snow. When I got out of college I didn't get any financial help from my parents except for the used car that I bought, so I was living the life of poverty. I rented an uninsulated bungalow out in the country, with a mattress on the floor, and I paid $150 a month. It had a second-hand dresser and desk and that was it. I went through that winter and I had to be frugal with the heat because I was making $164 a week at the time. After that winter I thought, "Fuck it, I have to get out of here." Actually, what happened was I was talking with a friend of mine on the phone, **Steve Sonsky**, that I went to college with, and already worked at THE HERALD, and he said that I needed to try Florida. And that's how I ended up down here.

RICH: *So where does Gary Brown come into this story?*

HARRY: I'm not sure that he does, aside from the fact that there have been a number of coincidences in our life. Gary lived in Miami. I joined CAPA-alpha in 1975, and it could be subliminally that Gary, who was the Central Mailer, and lived in Miami, influenced me to come down.

RICH: *How did you get into CAPA-alpha?*

HARRY: I guess what happened was **Sonsky** was a good friend with **Jeff Wasserman**, who was a member of K-a

"If not for CAPA-alpha, INTERLAC would never have

(CAPA-alpha). Either Jeff's comics were stored in Steve's basement or vice versa. We got in touch through Steve and we started corresponding. Jeff started sending me his apazines. This was 1973 or so. After I learned what an apa was and what people were doing, which was basically writing stuff for 50 other people to see, I thought, "Why the hell are all these people going to the effort to write this stuff for just 50 other people to see, instead of doing an actual fanzine which has an audience of hundreds?" I wasn't interested in joining, but after a while my attitude changed, I don't remember why. Anyway, I wrote to Gary and got on the K-a waitlist and three months later I was on the roster.

RICH: *Were you in INTERLAC already?*

HARRY: No, because INTERLAC wasn't formed until 1976.

RICH: *So you in part got the idea for INTERLAC from K-a.*

HARRY: Oh, absolutely. If it hadn't been for CAPA-alpha, INTERLAC would never have been formed because nobody would have been aware of an apa. It was basically **Rich Morrissey** who got the ball rolling on INTERLAC. He was already a member of K-a at the time.

RICH: *Presently the President of the "Let's Get John Byrne Back to DC Society."* (Laughter.)

HARRY: Right, and the **"Erik Larsen** Appreciation Society." *(More laughter.)*

RICH: *Currently the Central Mailer for CAPA-alpha is Carl Gafford. There have been some interesting people in K-a. You and I met through K-a.*

HARRY: That's right, actually we met

As mentioned a few pages back, here's an example of a CPL cover — this one by Craig Russell. As it turned out, this illustration was one of two unused covers from Marvel's first DR. STRANGE ANNUAL. Here, we've allowed you to view all three covers . . . along with the final published cover by Dave Cockrum.

been formed — nobody would have known of an apa."

via **Fred Hembeck.**

RICH: *Fred and I had corresponded a couple of times from seeing his stuff in the old BUYER'S GUIDE published by Alan Light. We got to meet a couple of times. He was a guest at Orlando Con one year. Fred said, "Look, you should meet this guy Harry Broertjes." I remember I used to try calling you but could never get you because you kept these crazy hours.*

HARRY: That's right, actually, we were at the same convention because I had lunch with Fred there . . .

RICH: *We were spending a lot of time together. I was staying at the Park Plaza Hotel far away from the con hotel, which was near Disney World. I took him and Lynn out to a French restaurant. We had a great time. Isn't it funny though, that you and I got to be friends through Hembeck and yet we haven't talked to him in years?*

HARRY: I wish I knew where Fred was these days . . .

RICH: *I would assume that he is still in Kingston or Poughkeepsie watching the Mets games and being married to the lovely Lynn Moss. Fred's a great guy, and I have lots of fond memories of him. In fact, he drew both of us in one of his comics, JIMMY OLSEN'S PAL, FRED HEMBECK. You and I were the Jimmy Olsen Liberation Front!*

Let's talk about what is happening now. The Legion has gone through some mega-changes, and you're still a pretty big fan. In fact, you're one of the biggest supporters of the changes so far as I can tell. Let's talk about where the Legion was going and where it has ended up.

HARRY: Actually, it's interesting that you should say where the Legion was going before **Giffen** came back because my feeling was that it wasn't going

"Of all the people in the world, who would be the

anywhere. **Paul Levitz** was doing some wonderful stuff for the Legion, but the impression I got was that he was on autopilot for the last few years. The stories didn't do a whole lot for me. My feeling was something had to be done to shake it up. There was a time in the '80s when **Pat Broderick** came on to the book and people were talking about the Legion. **Giffen** came on board and even more people started talking about it, and all of a sudden it became a fan favorite. It just goes to show that success sometimes doesn't do a whole lot of good for a book because once DC started its soft/hardcover plan, publishing LEGION, TITANS and the OUTSIDERS in the expensive formats, well, the stories didn't really hold up and sales didn't do that well. The book was on a steady decline.

RICH: *Paul had been writing the book and then left, and Gerry Conway took over.*

HARRY: Paul left the first time during the DC Implosion in 1978, and then Gerry came on and once he started writing things started opening up again. **Mike Barr** became the editor and then **Roy Thomas.** Of all the people in the world who would you think would never touch the book, he was at the top of my list. Just like twenty years ago, who

Unpublished cover pencils for Jack Kirby's first issue of JIMMY OLSEN, October, 1970.

last person to do JIMMY OLSEN — Jack Kirby."

would be the last person to do JIMMY OLSEN — **Jack Kirby.** Paul eventually came back, **Giffen** was on it, and all of a sudden the book was kicking ass again. The "Great Darkness Saga" is probably a story that everybody has read at some point, and it had enough going for it that a couple of years later it came out in a trade paperback. Anyway, it's probably *the* classic Legion story of the '80s. But then, you could ask me what happened afterward, between LEGION #20 and #50 in the first Baxter series and I would draw a blank, except for the death of Superboy.

RICH: *They were pretty forgettable stories for the most part.*

HARRY: Very forgettable, and we could see that in INTERLAC. When people are doing great things in a book, people are talking about it. When stories are bad and the art is horrible — for example, as far as INTERLAC was concerned quite a bit of **Gerry Conway's** writing, people would say, "His stories suck, they're awful, get him off the book," and go on and on about it. Hard-core Legion fans do tend to get pretty emotional about what's done with the book. During the first Baxter run people didn't have a whole lot to say. It was truly an unremarkable book — there wasn't anything to remark about. The book was there, they didn't color any costumes wrong, they didn't make any major grammatical errors, and that was the best you could say. There wasn't anything bad about it — just nothing good about it. That's my impression. And I've known Paul for years, I like his work and I have a great respect for him, but I think he was just coasting on the book.

RICH: *He knew he wanted off the book. Giffen had left the title for a time, Steve Lighle was on it, Terry Shoemaker, people were doing it a la Giffen and then Giffen came back. A lot of people were wondering what style he was going to do it in . . .*

HARRY: You're talking about the end of the first Baxter run?

RICH: *Right. What are your opinions about the death of Superboy? He was such an important part of the Legion. Literally, there would not have been a Legion without Superboy. How do you feel about his death and the Pocket Universe and all that stuff?*

HARRY: Well, on the one hand, I think it's bad that Superboy's not there anymore. But you have to put it in a much larger context of The Crisis and all of that. And then, of course, there was **John Byrne** coming in and turning everything upside-down. Actually, it was the same thing with Superman as it was for the Legion. Superman was on a long decline, and that character, probably more so than the Legion, needed a good kick in the ass to get it jump-started again. I think on balance what **Byrne** did was good for SUPERMAN, and by extension, good for DC and for comics in general. Which is not to say that I agree with everything that he did. I think that ultimately it was a mistake to do away with Superboy, and I think a few of the things **Byrne** did were gratuitous. Bearing that in mind, what he did was still pretty good. But, as a result, there was fallout on the Legion because it was tied so thoroughly to Superboy and to Smallville and the Twentieth Century. Once you rip all of that away, things just sort of float there until they sort themselves out. I wish there could have been

"They're just goddamn comic books and the

another way. I think the Pocket Universe was a total, wretched mess that never should have happened.

RICH: *I can't disagree with you. I think John Byrne did an admirable job with getting Superman back on track, which is not to take anything away from Marv or from Ordway, whom I hold in the highest regard. The impact on the Legion did bother me, and I felt it was unnecessary to do away with Superboy.*

HARRY: The thing you need to keep in mind, that people forget, is that things have to change if they are going to continue to grow and thrive. You can't root yourself so solidly in a certain history, a certain mythos, that it leaves you no room to ever branch out and explore other avenues later on down the road. The other thing is that people have to remember that they're just goddamn comic books and that the world isn't going to end if a bit of history changes. If there's something you liked years ago, chances are you still have that comic and you can pull it out and read it any time your heart desires.

RICH: *You hear that, Rich Morrissey? And let me say that history is always written by the winner. And, anal retentive fanboys that want everything just so — life isn't like that!* You *may want to know that this is this and that is that, but it's* not. *There have been so many incarnations of Superman and the Fantastic Four. Did Reed Richards fight in World War II? That would make him kind of an old guy, if that's the case.*

HARRY: Didn't Peter Parker graduate from high school twenty years ago?

RICH: *Exactly. They're* only *comics. It's not that important. There is a certain suspension of disbelief that one must have anyway when reading these stories.*

HARRY: There does need to be a certain amount of internal consistency, but there also has to be a statute of limitations of how anal retentive you get about these things. The good stuff you keep, the other stuff you can let fade away.

RICH: *It's the same way with DOCTOR WHO. You read some of the fan stuff and they're looking for rationales for this or that thing happening. Forget it. Just enjoy it for what it is. The stuff really isn't designed to be scrutinized that heavily. If it's* that *important to you, maybe you should take up studying the Bible. And even* there *you can find inconsistencies.*

HARRY: Right, and **David Anthony Kraft** should insert that equal time will be provided for responsible, opposing viewpoints. *(Laughter.)* What's making things difficult for the Legion is that certain things that could have been left to fade away now have to be explicitly done away with in a very sharp break. It would have been possible, for example, to have an excuse for Superboy to have left the Legion. They could have let him quit in what, 1976, and then just not ever mentioned him again. And now, you know, in 1991 you could do a new origin that glosses over Superboy and there would be no problem.

RICH: *They did it with the Justice League . . .*

HARRY: Right, but we see now they can't really do it, and now there's going to be a new origin that writes its way around it when the memory of Superboy is still going to be too fresh with too many people. It's not going to go over too well.

RICH: *Not only fresh, but reinforced on a weekly basis on television.*

HARRY: I'm talking more about the hard-core fans than the casual readers.

RICH: *Let's talk a little about the current LEGION book. That series ended and picked up five years later. Being a heavy Legion honcho who regularly speaks with our buddy Keith Giffen, you knew that this was coming. You've been privy to the changes. Tell us a little about the new book. About the new team.*

HARRY: I like it. There are things about it I don't like. I've talked to Keith about this, and every six weeks or so we talk for an hour or so on the phone. The great thing is I can tell him, "This sucks," or he can tell me that I'm full of shit or I don't know what I'm talking about. We know that we can agree to disagree, even in strong terms, and still be friends about it. I've told him I thought the book was a bit confusing. That things are being introduced in one issue and maybe eight issues later they will wind back towards it and then we'll find out what has been going on. My feeling is that if you are going to introduce something you'd better come back in the next issue or the issue after that and explain it. Don't introduce something in issue #1 and then expect people to wait patiently until issue #10 or issue #20 to find out what the deal is. I think that is unfair to the reader. There's a lot to be covered, it's five years later and the Legion has been disbanded and then re-formed. There are readers who just might lose patience. For that matter, readers like me who might forget about it until the time comes.

RICH: *I know you don't get the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE, but there have been a few classified ads that say things like "LEGION sucks, it's confusing, I don't know what's going on. Bring back Levitz, blah, blah, blah." We've both attended college, we're both hopefully slightly above average intelligence — well, maybe.* (Laughter.) *For the sake of argument let's assume that — and I'm confused with a lot of the stuff that's going on. It will be different when the collected edition is put together and you can read something in its entirety.*

HARRY: Well, Keith and I have talked about that, and I think that the first twelve issues should be collected in a trade paperback that is annotated and explains things as you go along. Explains

world isn't going to end if a bit of history changes."

Here and next three pages: A sampling of cover roughs by Eric Larsen — a rare glimpse into the creative process of a fan favorite. For more of these gems, pick up a back-issue copy of CI #85.

where certain characters come from. For example, if you aren't my age, 37 years old, you're not going to remember who Glorith is unless you read it originally and retained it. You wouldn't know that she was the sidekick to the Time Trapper back in 1964. Or what the significance of her appearance is now that the Legion has sort of blipped through alternate realities and is now in this new reality. There are some difficulties, and I think it is unfair to the readers not to explain certain things that would contribute to their understanding and enjoyment.

RICH: *Especially when you're starting all over again, you shouldn't have to rely as heavily on the old series. It should be clearer from the start.*

HARRY: What is ironic about it is that a lot of people in INTERLAC now swear that, and have come up with the notion that **Giffen** hates fans, because that is a way to antagonize fans. A lot of that is because of an interview I did with him which ran through INTERLAC a couple of years ago. He did particularly say that he likes to get certain people stoked. Before the Legion started up, they were saying that it was going to be awful; he hates fans, he is going to do everything he can to make fans mad, they said. As it turns out, the new Legion is very much a fan book. You have to have been a fan of the Legion to have any chance to fully understand what is going on right now. The characters are not introduced in a way that new fans would be able to absorb easily.

RICH: *Not only that, but he's got Tom and Mary Bierbaum, who* were *fans, doing the book with him.*

HARRY: If anything, THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES is *the* fan-oriented book on the market. Also, there are zillions of in-jokes that Tom and Mary

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"I don't put WATCHMEN and LEGION on the same plane."

are putting into the book. Names of people, addresses, not an issue goes by that there aren't half a dozen in-jokes.

RICH: *Would you say that this is a very demanding sort of storytelling?*

HARRY: Yes, definitely. Keith seems to be approaching it in the terms of the first issue being the first chapter, the second issue the second chapter and so on.

RICH: *That's great for when the paperback comes out but in the meantime . . .*

HARRY: Right, and basically I don't think you can structure a comic book in the same way you do a novel. Unless, of course, it is a limited series like WATCHMEN.

RICH: *At least they're doing what is happening so far like they said they would, which they* didn't *start doing until issue #5.*

HARRY: Well, there have been a few screw-ups there, they lost a letters page along the way . . .

RICH: *And they lost an editor along the way.*

HARRY: Although **Michael Eury** — talk about your fan books, Michael used to be a member of INTERLAC. It's actually getting a little incestuous here. He was there, he was gone, and now he's back as editor. The new series' first editor, Mark Waid, is also an INTERLAC member. So is Tom McGraw, the book's colorist. And Tom and Mary have been members for more than 10 years.

RICH: *As long as Flynt Brojj doesn't show up again. Or was he killed off in the Crisis?*

HARRY: Flynt Brojj will be showing up again.

RICH: *Flynt Brojj being an amalgamation of Mike Flynn and Harry Broertjes.*

HARRY: Right, that was in a backup story that **Cary Bates** wrote in SUPERBOY #213, which featured (as the lead story) **Shooter's** first Legion story since coming back to comics. The LEGION book is a book you've got to pay attention to to appreciate. If you sit and read it and then go back and read it at a later date, there's a lot of things you might have missed the first time around. You can say the same thing about WATCHMEN. I'm not trying to put WATCHMEN and THE LEGION on the same plane. Let's face it, it's no insult to say that **Keith Giffen** and **Tom** and **Mary Bierbaum** aren't on the same level as **Alan Moore.**

RICH: *It's not even a question of level, they're working on different levels.*

HARRY: Right, but at the same time, it is a book that you need to pay attention to. For people who are used to having stories explained to them in words of one syllable, this is not the book for them.

RICH: *I agree. And I also think that it's not written for a thirteen or fourteen-year-old either. Which is not to say*

"I find in my old age that I don't have as much time to read

they're not intelligent . . .

HARRY: . . . I don't know about that. If I were thirteen or fourteen and into comics, I think I might view the book as a challenge, especially if I didn't know all of the Legion background. I might look at it and say, "This has got to make sense or they wouldn't print it." Now that might be a false assumption, as we know from real life, but if I were fourteen I think that's how I would view the book. I would go through it and read it several times and say, "OK, this has to make sense, let's figure out what it is."

RICH: *It's entirely possible. And I'm not saying you're wrong, but it's my feeling that, especially in the past few years with the rise of the direct market, there are comics written for a higher level of intelligence. Or at least that the age of the reader is at least older than the imaginary nine-year-old audience.*

HARRY: Of course . . .

RICH: *I think this is an example of that . . .*

HARRY: Except for the fact that you really don't find the sophistication of theme like you would in a book like, say, SANDMAN, for example. Or **Alan Moore's** SWAMP THING. You don't have a Legion that is out fighting space pirates and the Super-Moby-Dick of space. What you have is a Legion that is in a galaxy that is in an economic depression, everything is falling apart, planets are making war against one another. The Legion has been broken up, and here they are trying to put the pieces back together. There is a good story behind it, but it's not your traditional super-hero story.

RICH: *Getting back to something you said earlier, about THE LEGION being a fan book, I really think that it is. I think it always has been one. Fans have always kept the Legion going when it was just a one-issue story that Jerry Siegel wrote, the superhero club, certainly your in-*

comics as I did. I'm not sure where the time has gone."

volvement right up today where there is a whole new start. It is something that has always appealed to the fans and has been designed with fans in mind.

HARRY: And there's a phrase for that. What we used to say is that the Legion had "built-in, nifty appeal." Here are a bunch of kids — and that was back when the Legionnaires were kids — growing up and doing things that we would just dream about. **John Forte** would come up with these really weird space monsters, and **Hamilton** was writing this space opera for kids, and it was wonderful stuff. The Legion has grown up with its readers over the years. There was this fiction that lasted, I don't know how long, that the Legionnaires were still in their teens. Probably by around 1972 that was no longer tenable, but people still pretended it anyway. Much later on it became official: OK, they're not kids anymore.

RICH: *Even the Teen Titans aren't teens anymore!*

HARRY: And it's kind of a shame that there isn't a book out there that has the built-in nifty appeal for the kids of the '90s that THE LEGION had for the kids of the '60s. Maybe DC and Tom and Mary will pull it off with the new Kid Legion spin-off that will be coming out in a few months.

RICH: *Maybe there is a book like that out there already and we're too old to know what it is!* (Laughter.)

HARRY: No, I think that if there was we would be aware of it from just seeing kids in comic shops and the way they react. Maybe that's what THE X-MEN are, I don't know, if you buy into the notion that X-MEN is about alienation and fighting a society that doesn't understand you.

RICH: *I don't know what THE X-MEN are. To me it's a lot of characters sitting around making speeches to each other and complaining with very meticulous, delicate art. I haven't been a fan of or excited about THE X-MEN, really, since our pal John Byrne left.*

HARRY: That's pretty much the same with me. I read very few Marvel comics these days. When I was in college was when I really started to read Marvel regularly. Over the years I just kind of drifted away from them.

RICH: *How much do you spend on comics a month?*

HARRY: Probably about sixty dollars. And that's averaging about fifteen bucks a week. Now if there's a hardcover DC book out like THE GREATEST GOLDEN AGE STORIES EVER TOLD, then that will bump it upward.

RICH: *Mike Gold's got to get you back on the comp list.*

HARRY: I agree. You listening, Mike?

RICH: *Your taste varies quite a bit. You don't just read Marvel and DC. You're the one that introduced me to CHERRY POPTART so to speak.* (Laughter.)

HARRY: And I know you enjoyed it.

RICH: *I did, still do, bought all of the back issues.*

HARRY: Hey, I still have a soft spot in my heart for juvenile sexual innuendo.

RICH: *Right, dirty comics. What else are you reading these days?*

HARRY: What I'm finding out in my old age is that I don't have as much time to read comics as I once did. There was a time when I could belong to three apas, read virtually every Marvel and DC that was coming out, and still have a social life. And work 40 hours a week and think nothing of it. And I don't know if time is slowing down for me or other stuff is getting in the way. I'm finding comics sitting there two or three weeks before I get to them. I'm only in one apa now. Time is the only thing holding me back. It wouldn't be anything to add another ten or fifteen bucks a week for comics, but I don't have the time for them. I'm not sure where the time has gone.

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

SUGGESTIONS GALORE!

Dear David Anthony Kraft;

I have meant to write a letter to COMICS INTERVIEW for quite a while — in fact, even before #100, I had meant to write a letter for quite some ti— well, a while, anyway — now, I finally find myself in letter-writing mood, and with implements, etc., handy, but my copy of #100 misplaced!

So, I'm writing this letter w/out having re-read #100 first, or having it by to check. Comments:

I found the top 100 list interesting (even if — Yess up, now! — you lifted the idea pretty much from the "Heavy 100" lists that ESQUIRE magazine used to periodically publish in the 1970s). The explanation of "newspaper strip artists/ creators must have continuity in their strips to be included" at least was explained, and follows a certain logic (explaining why **Charles Schulz** and **Garry Trudeau** are in and **Mort Walker** and **Jim Davis** out). Actually, I think I'll forego any additional comment on the 100 until I can recheck it, and comment on other matters.

If I can run a few suggestions for future interviewees past you —

Bob Haney — I've really gotten kind of interested in that "old-school" style of comics scripting, especially old DC-style. **Haney** is kind of an example of that "old-school" of comics scripters — now more-or-less completely passed from the scene, replaced by scripters/creative talent who approach it more from a closeness to the comics medium itself, a "grown-up-with-it" fascination — a fan background, in other words.

Actually, I probably could have stopped after line 3 there, but I really would like to see some discussion with **Haney,** who is an example of that "older" school of looking at comics scripting/ characterization and continuity (of course) that most fans have traditionally paid less attention to — but deserves, I think, some attention. Okay?

Actually, this goes for almost any other old-timer/vet — **Murray Boltinoff? Sheldon Mayer? Jack Oleck** (of umpteen '70s DC mystery title scripts fame)? Actually, my mind is a little fixated (obviously!) on old DC now, but, rest assured, this goes for more-or-less *anyone.*

I recently came across CI #1, with its quite nifty interview with one of Western Publishing/Gold Key's editors, from back when they were still in business — it was an interesting glance at a "different" corner of the comic-book world — I'd like to suggest something similar with some of Archie's people, but in full fact I'm sort of afraid it would mostly turn into basic "We are excited about our new projects and hope to continue our legacy of fifty years . . . great family entertainment . . . America's favorite teenage . . . fun for all ages" Archie-Speak, at least if it were any current Archie employee or executive.

No, I'm not expecting "Riverdale Dearest" — I *enjoy* the Archie titles/ characters, but it does seem Archie tends to hide behind that "total goodness/ sweetness" corporate image and not anything to come out from behind the facade — like a (considerably lesser) Disney, or pre-revolutionary Russia for that matter — "Archie does not believe in tears."

This is a more rambling-sounding letter than I meant for it to be sounding like — sorry! Well, might as well get into a couple or so suggestions before I go.

Stan Lee — how about an interview with Stan about his current-day work as writer of the SPIDER-MAN newspaper strip, and his feelings on that/his approach to it/how he does it. He's been doing that strip for approaching fifteen years now. I think it'd be interesting to see his insight — perhaps an insight into the occasional other comics work he does these days (one-shots, graphic novels). I don't really need another reminiscence of Bullpen years gone by. Actually, I wouldn't mind it all that much, but, seriously, I do feel an article concentrating on Stan's work today would be giving itself a brand-new angle, a fairly different one — and one that might allow for more openness, and a bit more detail spent on the topic at hand (rather than covering thirty-plus years in one interview) — and not go through old arguments once more, again, too.

On a similar slant, how about a **Jerry Siegel** interview concentrating specifically on his *non*-Superman work — especially recent years and the Gold Key stuff he did in the '60s, maybe FUNNYMAN too? Especially since he is one of the original comics creators — one of the original superhero creators/a member of the first "comic-book" generation, obviously — who still (if intermittently) works on new scripts/concepts, at least for the symbolic appeal of a first-generation member who is still alive (and active) today.

I'd kind of like to see a **Cathy Guisewhite** interview, as much or more because I'd like to see what unpublished art could accompany a piece on her!

I guess I'll sign off now, if only because I've admittedly written this letter kind of sloppily, especially in the grammar department — sorry — "first drafts" I guess. Am I forgiven? I'm sorry — and this letter *appears* pretty long now, I obviously. I will say that I wish that the **Neal Adams** interview a few issues ago could've reproduced one or two of those Archie gags that he mentioned as his *first* published work. Archie stubbornness, perhaps? Some of that "Archie corporate facade/corporate image" I spoke of earlier? Ah well.

See ya!

Leroy Gomez
1761 Shawano Ave. #15
GB, Wisc. 54303

MOST POWERFUL —?

Dear David,

I recently picked up the 100th edition of COMICS INTERVIEW in which you list the 100 most powerful people in comics. I appreciate that you may not have considered including any business folk from this side of the Atlantic, but would like to bring you up to date with both **Mike Lake** and my current companies.

1. Titan Distributors. After Diamond and Capital, the third-largest distributor in the direct sale market, but the fourth largest (after Heroes World) if you count only comic-book orders (rather than including related products and merchandise). Founded in 1977.

2. Forbidden Planet. Eight comic-book stores in the U.K. (London, Glasgow, Cardiff, Dublin, Nottingham,

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

Newcastle, Brighton and Milton Keynes), three in the U.S. (two in NYC, one in Los Angeles) and a U.K.-based mail-order operation. Founded in 1978.

3. Titan Books. The original and largest graphic-novel publisher in the U.K.: Reprint material from Dark Horse, Tundra, Eclipse, Fantagraphics, Catalan, Graphitti and Vortex; created by **Miller, Bisley, Gaiman, Adams, Sienkiewicz, McKean, Gibbons, Barker, Morrison, Elmer** and **Moebius** amongst others. Also original work (like VIOLENT CASES), an extensive film and TV list, merchandise (T-shirts, etc.) and a design studio. Over 60 books a year, almost 500 books published. Founded in 1981.

4. Titan Productions. Theatre and film production company. Currently running THUNDERBIRDS FAB in London's West End (our equivalent of Broadway). Founded in 1989.

5. Murder One. U.K.'s largest crime specialist book store. Founded in 1988.

They are, as a number of your top business 100 have observed, a unique portfolio in the world of comics.

Nick Landau
Managing Director
19 Valentine Place
London, SE1 8QH
United Kingdom

OYSTER CULT UPDATE

Dear David,

I've been meaning to get back to you since, only days after I sent you that last letter, I ran across a *second* compilation CD, ON FLAME WITH ROCK AND ROLL. Very few of these seem to be in the stores, which is a shame as it seems to be the *real* all-hits album. It's got "(Don't Fear) The Reaper," "Transmaniacon MC," "Cities On Flame," "Kick Out the Jams," "R.U. Ready 2 Rock," "Career of Evil" (the very different 45 version!), "Godzilla," "Burnin' For you," "Dominance and Submission" and "Death Valley Nights." A much better set than the other one, though they kind of make an interesting 2-record set (the covers are very similar, in fact). Oddly, it's on "CBS Special Products" instead of "Columbia/CBS." Considering it is a CD, it's a shame they couldn't have made it longer than 39 minutes — and maybe included such 45s as "In Thee" and "Shooting Shark," or such album cuts as "Take Me Away," "White Flags" or "I Am The One You Warned Me Of." Oh well . . .

I also recently came across a CD from France (a rarity I think since most stores refuse to stock imports these days). It's titled simply BLUE OYSTER CULT, but on the back it says "Recorded Live, New-York 72" and features "The Red and the Black," "Buck's Boogie," "Workshop of the Telescopes" and "Cities On Flame With Rock and Roll."

Since I've bought my CD player 6 months ago, I've been trying to buy *new* albums, instead of spending *all* my record money on replacing *old* ones, but in either case my priorities have mostly been determined by how rare some records are (like, imports have highest priority — that's why I've been picking up so many **Rick Wakeman** CDs, and am currently trying to upgrade my **Michael Nesmith** and **Meat Loaf** collections). I imagine I *may* get around to **Blue Oyster Cult** someday, but at the *moment* you can find their stuff everywhere — and for pretty cheap. (I just hope it lasts!)

Henry R. Kujawa
1202 Everett Street
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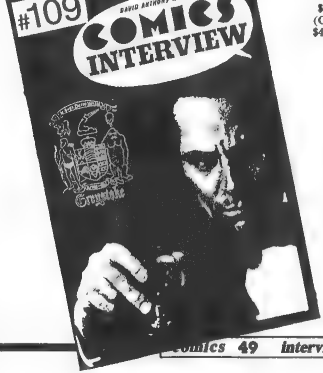

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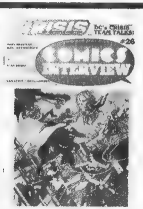

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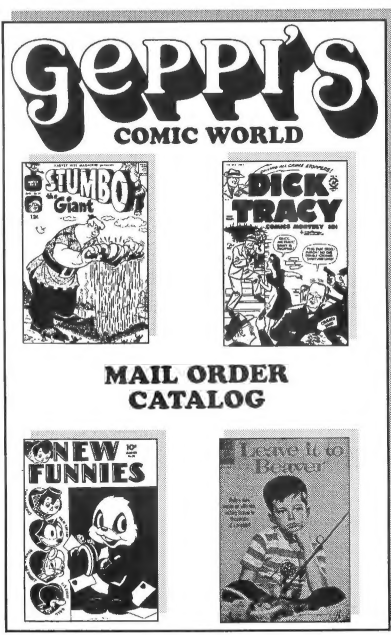

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